

Rebuilding Nara's Tōdaiji on the Foundations of the Chinese Pure Land:  
a Campaign for Buddhist Social Development

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## Abstract

### Rebuilding Nara's Tōdaiji on the Foundations of the Chinese Pure Land: a Campaign for Buddhist Social Development

This dissertation considers how Chinese models of Buddhist social organization and Pure Land thought undergirded the Japanese monk Chōgen's campaign to restore the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji, destroyed in the Gempei civil war at the end of the 12th century. While Chōgen's activities as chief solicitor of the campaign partially owed to his network of social connections earned through a selective Buddhist education, Chōgen's three pilgrimages to China were crucial for providing much of the knowledge, methods, and technologies that made possible the largest religious and civil engineering project attempted in Japan to that time.

Though nominally a Buddhist monk, Chōgen embodied the ideal of a polymath. In order to recreate Japan's foremost Buddhist symbol, he was compelled to assume a wide range of responsibilities: fundraising among aristocrats and warriors; forming a network of lieutenants, donors, and common devotees; managing temple estates that provided revenues; developing transportation infrastructure to carry materials and supplies; casting the Great Buddha statue; overseeing religious rites; and finally, rebuilding Tōdaiji's halls. These diverse activities required creative forms of religio-social networking and technologies not extant in Japan.

During his travels to the Chinese port city of Ningbo, as well as the religious mountains of Tiantaishan and Ayuwangshan, Chōgen learned of Pure Land halls built by lay confraternities, and adopted them as models for the later sanctuaries he constructed around Japan for proselytization and fundraising purposes. He also borrowed organizational principles from Chinese Pure Land societies from the urban centers of Ningbo and Hangzhou in order to create a massive Pure Land network in his homeland that embraced former militants from the civil war, the imperial family, monastics from a wide range of institutions, and even the common populace – all of whom contributed to the Tōdaiji rebuilding effort.

Ultimately, the fields of religion and technology that Chōgen imported from China not only enabled the reconstruction of Japan's most important Buddhist temple, but also brought Japan into the fold of an emerging East China Sea religious macroculture of the late 12th and early 13th centuries that expanded with the activities of traders and later Japanese pilgrims who would emulate Chōgen's voyages.

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## Introduction

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Arguably no name could be more fitting than “Profound Source,” the literal translation of the Japanese monk Chōgen’s 重源 (1121-1206) ordination name. Chōgen earned renown in his middle years as “the monk who traveled to China on three occasions,” sojourning at several of the most prominent religious institutions of the Southern Song 南宋 (1127-1279). China was conceptualized by Chōgen’s Japanese contemporaries as the proximate source of Buddhism, and thus study abroad offered the chance to apprehend a more original and coherent form of the religion in Chōgen’s mind. During his later years, the knowledge and experience he gained in China proved crucial for his supervisory role to recreate the centerpiece of Japanese Buddhism, the statue of the Great Buddha (*daibutsu* 大仏) at Tōdaiji 東大寺, along with the halls of the temple that housed it.

Chōgen was fated to live through interesting times. In 1180, as Chōgen neared the age of sixty, the spreading flames of civil war between the country’s two most powerful clans, the Taira 平 and the Minamoto 源, consumed Nara 奈良 – the ancient capital and still home to the prestigious religious institutions of Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji 興福寺. Monks from the two temples protested the Taira clan’s attempts to monopolize political power, and as punishment for their disloyalty, the troops of Taira no Shigehira 平重衡 (1157-1185), son of the clan’s headman, Kiyomori 清盛 (1118-1181), burned the halls of the temples to the ground, an event memorialized in the *Karmic Origins of the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji* picture scroll (*Tōdaiji daibutsu engi* 東大寺大仏縁起, Figure 1). Many of Tōdaiji’s Buddhist statues, paintings, and implements were reduced to ashes, but the most significant casualty was the Tōdaiji Great Buddha, a nearly fifteen meter high bronze casting of Vairocana



Figure 1. *Karmic Origins of the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji, last fascicle*. 1 scroll. Muromachi Period, Tenbun 5 (1536). Tōdaiji, Nara. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 1, p. 50-51.

Buddha (Birushana butsu 毘盧遮那仏)<sup>1</sup> constructed in the mid-8th century by Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (r. 724-749), Japan's first great imperial Buddhist sponsor. Tōdaiji was founded as the head institution of Shōmu's network of provincial temples (*kokubunji* 国分寺) that stretched across the country as a symbol of the dual power of the emperor and the Buddhist faith. The Taira army's brazen act caused agony to nobles and monks alike, who now feared nothing could check the march of war.

The story of this dissertation begins with Chōgen's early life, continues with his middle years as a student abroad in China, and ends with his campaign to restore the Great Buddha, Tōdaiji, and the hopes of his country. Chōgen's ingenuity was exhibited at almost every stage of the restoration, which required creative forms of religio-social networking and new technologies imported from the continent. While nominally a Buddhist monk, Chōgen embodied the ideal of a polymath. In order to recreate Japan's foremost Buddhist symbol, he was compelled to assume a wide range of responsibilities: fundraising among aristocrats and warriors; forming a network of lieutenants, donors, and common devotees; managing temple estates (*shōen* 莊園) to provide revenues; casting the Great Buddha statue; developing transportation infrastructure to carry materials and supplies; overseeing religious rites; and finally, rebuilding Tōdaiji's halls.

Chōgen's return to the roots of Buddhism in China as inspiration for the rebuilding of Tōdaiji following Japan's civil war shares much in common with the revival of classicism in Italy, France, and Germany following the unimagined horrors of modern combat in World War I. In each case, the respective countries emerged from debilitating conflicts that sapped

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1. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku* 東大寺統要録, p. 5-6.



populations of confidence in their leaders and optimism for the future. As a way of restoring their countries' spirits and assuaging recent suffering, sculptors such as Arturo Martini retreated to the permanence of classical forms exemplified in the Etruscan art of the Italian peninsula, finding in the past a primordial symbol of future potential.<sup>2</sup> In France, the heroic bodies sculpted in ancient Greece and Rome were reimagined as paintings of common laborers, whose chiseled frames tilled their fields with no less vigor than that of the gods of mythology felling their foes.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, in Germany, New Vision photography innovated at the Bauhaus favored minimalist depictions of subjects isolated from plain backgrounds in order to deliver a sense of a timeless and enduring world.<sup>4</sup> Such trends carried over to film, as well, for example Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 documentary of the XI Olympiad, which sought to juxtapose romantically depicted landscapes, old and new. Riefenstahl remarked that she "could see the ancient ruins of the classical Olympic sites slowly emerging from patches of fog and the Greek temples and sculptures drifting by."<sup>5</sup>

The Gempei Civil War that razed Tōdaiji, of course, did not approach the scale of the early 20th century conflict that fractured Europe, but the 12th century Japanese response to the destruction of their country's symbols of political and religious power was nevertheless similar. Chōgen was chosen as the chief of the campaign to restore Tōdaiji and its Great Buddha primarily because of his deep roots in China – the analogue of Greece, Rome, or

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2. Braun, p. 145-148.

3. See Silver, figure 12.

4. Nugent, p. 161.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Etruria for southern Europeans – an enduring matrix where the patterns that generated civilization could be rediscovered.

During his three trips to China, Chōgen amassed knowledge about lay religious societies that invigorated urban institutions and rural communities alike. He also learned of contemporary trends in temple architecture and statuary design that had evolved in the century and a half since the last recorded Japanese monk's visit. Chōgen understood these developments through a worldview that divided East Asia geographically into “original” and “derived” Buddhist lands based on the religion's procession across the continent. In China, religio-cultural changes in the intervening years since Buddhism was transmitted to Japan were not viewed as deviations from the Buddha's original teaching, but rather as new “discoveries” of the religion's classical configurations. Because of this, the forms of Buddhism Chōgen encountered in China were branded with a stamp of authenticity from the Japanese perspective. At the same time, when these forms were reproduced in Japan, they had the effect of drawing the country into a tighter orbit around the nucleus of Buddhism's original dispensation.

Topics related to Chōgen have been covered to a degree in existing literature. Janet Goodwin discussed elements of Chōgen's fundraising campaign in a series of articles and as part of a broader study entitled *Alms and Vagabonds*. John Rosenfield published a recent monograph, *Portraits of Chōgen*, contextualizing statues commissioned by Chōgen for Tōdaiji within the history of Japanese Buddhist sculpture. Many other English language scholars have also written on topics germane to this study. Ryūichi Abé's work on Kūkai and Esoteric Buddhist theory, *The Weaving of Mantra*, help to frame many of Chōgen's undertakings, since Chōgen was first and foremost a Shingon monk. James Robson's studies

on the insertion of items into statues, and Brian Ruppert's treatment of relic worship in Medieval Japan, *Jewel in the Ashes*, are relevant to Chōgen's reliquary distribution. Finally, Daniel Getz, Daniel Stevenson, and B.J. Ter Haar's works on Song period Pure Land worship and lay Buddhist formation provide many clues regarding the origin and configuration of Chōgen's own Pure Land network that supported his temple rebuilding campaign.

However, this dissertation is chiefly indebted to the work of Japanese scholars, who have uncovered many details of Chōgen's life and activities. While their number is too great to acknowledge in totality here, some of those I most frequently cite include: Taniguchi Kosei's 谷口耕生 articles on Ningbo and Sino-Japanese cultural transmission, Ide Seinosuke's 井手誠之輔 studies of Ningbo painting, Naitō Sakae's 内藤栄 work on Ayuwang reliquaries, Satō Seijun's 佐藤成順 research on Song Pure Land Buddhism, Chikusa Masaaki's 竺沙雅章 compilation of sources regarding the People of the Way and grave temples, Kamikawa Michio's 上川通夫 work orienting Japanese concepts of center and periphery, Ishida Hisatoyo's 石田尚豊 study of Chōgen's Amidabutsu naming practice, Aoki Atsushi's 青木淳 research on *kechien* 結縁 lists, Yokouchi Hiroto's 横内裕人 treatment of Chōgen's fundraising campaign, Harada Masatoshi's 原田正俊 studies connecting Chōgen with Shingon lineages, Oka Genyū 岡玄雄 work on Chōgen's statuary, and Nakao Takashi 中尾堯 and Gomi Fumihiko's 五味文彦 biographies of Chōgen. Several Chinese scholars have also contributed to the basis of this study, including Zeng Qihai's 曾其海 work on Zhili's responses to Japanese ecclesiastic's questions about Tiantai doctrine, and Bo Xinian's 博熹年 research on similarities between the Great Buddha style of architecture and prototypes in southern China.

Within the art history discipline specifically, Chōgen has been the subject of a number of exhibitions, particularly within the last decade. Statuary and other items previously stored in the Shōsōin 正倉院, the Tōdaiji treasure house, were shown in 1986 by The Art Institute of Chicago in the exhibition “The Great Eastern Temple: Treasures of Japanese Buddhist Art from Tōdai-ji,” organized by Mino Yutaka with contributions from John M. Rosenfield, William H. Coaldrake, Samuel C. Morse, and Christine M. E. Guth. The exhibition’s accompanying volume<sup>6</sup> included essays examining Tōdaiji’s architecture, sculpture, and painting within the broader history of Japanese art traditions. It featured many of the Buddhist sculptures by Kaikei and Unkei discussed in later chapters in this dissertation, as well as *Tōdaiji engi* picture scrolls from the Kamakura and Muromachi Periods.

The Art History of Chicago exhibition was followed by another at the Nara National Museum in 2002, “Ultimate Tōdai-ji: Incomparable Masterworks from Nara’s Great Eastern Temple” (*Tōdaiji no subete* 東大寺のすべて), which accompanied rituals and events commemorating the 1250th anniversary of the consecration of Tōdaiji’s original Great Buddha statue constructed by Emperor Shōmu in the early 8th century. The range of exhibited items was larger than those shown at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1986, and covered the founding of the temple during the Nara Period, the temple’s place in the history of Kegon (C. Huayan) 華嚴 Buddhism in Japan, the two reconstructions of the temple in the Kamakura and Edo Periods, the Four Saints of Tōdaiji, archaeological excavations, and some of the sculptures that had been installed at the temple. The essays for the accompanying

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6. Mino Yutaka, et al., *The Great Eastern Temple: Treasures of Japanese Buddhist Art from Tōdai-ji*, Chicago: the Art Institute of Chicago in association with Indiana University Press, 1986.

exhibition catalog<sup>7</sup> discussed the general scope of extant artworks from Tōdaiji, the layout of Japanese Buddhist temple halls, and the characteristics of the temple's *Abhidharma Mandala* (*kusha mandara* 俱舍曼荼羅), which portrays the Śākyamuni triad surrounded by representatives of later Indian Buddhist doctrines as discussed in the *Abhidharma Storehouse Treatise* (*Abidatsuma kusha ron* 阿毘達磨俱舍論) by Vasubandhu.

In 2006, on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the death of Chōgen, the Nara National Museum staged another exhibition, “Priest Chōgen and the Rebuilding of Tōdaiji: the Kamakura Era, an Age of Artistic Revival and Innovation” (*Daikanjin chōgen: tōdaiji no kamakura fukkō to arata na bi no sōshutsu* 大勧進重源：鎌倉復興と新たな美の創出). The catalog for the exhibition<sup>8</sup> contained articles about Chōgen's Tōdaiji temple solicitation campaign, the reconstruction of the temple, Chōgen's relic worship, the connection between Mañjuśrī and the rebuilding of the temple, the Tōdaiji estates (*shōen*), and Chōgen's good works projects.

As mentioned above, in 2011 John M. Rosenfield published the first English monograph about Chōgen and his place in Japanese art history, *Portraits of Chōgen: The Transformation of Buddhist Art in Early Medieval Japan*. Rosenfield briefly covered Chōgen's biography, the original construction of the Great Buddha during the Nara Period, and some of the challenges Chōgen faced during his reconstruction. However, the majority

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7. Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed., *Tōdaiji no subete: daibutsu kaigen 1250-nen* 東大寺のすべて：大仏開眼一二五〇年, Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2002.

8. Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed., *Daikanjin chōgen: tōdaiji no kamakura fukkō to arata na bi no sōshutsu* 大勧進重源：東大寺の鎌倉復興と新たな美の創出, Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2006.

of Rosenfield's discussion concerned the history of East Asian portraiture, the Buddhist sculpture ateliers that manufactured statues for Tōdaiji's halls, and some of the items Chōgen imported from China, including vajras and a painting of the *Five Patriarchs of the Pure Land School* (*Jōdo goso* 浄土五祖図). Rosenfield also included a translation of Chōgen's only autobiographical document, the *Sazenshū* 作善集, or *Benevolent Deeds of Namu-Amidabutsu*. Translations of Chōgen's *Sazenshū* also appear in this dissertation, though I have generally retranslated the selected passages to better fit the context in which I present them.

The Nara National Museum held another exhibition about the rebuilding of Tōdaiji in 2012 under the name "Shōgun Yoritomo and the Monk Chōgen: Bonding Kamakura and Nara for the Revival of Tōdai-ji (*Yoritomo to chōgen: tōdaiji saikō wo sasaeta kamakura to nara no kizuna* 頼朝と重源：東大寺再興を支えた鎌倉と奈良の絆).<sup>9</sup> The exhibition covered similar subjects from the Nara National Museum's show six years previously, but also included portraits and edicts of the Shōgun Yoritomo, who became the chief government sponsor for the reconstruction of Tōdaiji following the death of the Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa in 1192. Also included were items related to Eisai, another monk and one of Chōgen's closest companions, who became solicitor general for Tōdaiji after Chōgen passed away in 1206. The exhibition catalog contained short articles regarding Yoritomo's edicts, a blueprint for the *Iconography and Dimensions of the Great Buddha* (*Daibutsuzō sunbō*

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9. See the accompanying catalog, *Yoritomo to Chōgen: tōdaiji saikō wo sasaeta kamakura to nara no kizuna*, Nara: Nara Hakubutsukan, 2012.

*chūmon* 大仏像寸法注文), pilgrimages by Tōdaiji monks to the Ise Grand Shrine (Ise jingū 伊勢神宮), and reliquaries Chōgen created for Tōdaiji and its subtemples.

Most recently in 2013, the Kanazawa Bunko 金沢文庫 held an exhibition entitled “Tōdaiji: the Kamakura Period Reconstruction and the Flourishing of Kegon Buddhism” (*Tōdaiji: kamakura saiken to kegon kōryū* 東大寺：鎌倉再建と華嚴興隆). As implied, the exhibition showcased Tōdaiji’s role in the reinvigoration of Kegon Buddhism, and included items from the Kanazawa Bunko’s own collection in addition to a previously undiscovered, complete version of the *Sōnshōin bengyō sessō* 尊勝院弁曉説草, which records the teachings of the late 12th c. Tōdaiji abbot Bengyō 弁曉 (1139-1202). Bengyō assisted with the rebuilding of Tōdaiji after serving as the head of the Sonshōin 尊勝院, the seat of Kegon studies at the temple..

Previous art exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Nara National Museum, the Kanazawa Bunko, as well as John Rosenfield’s monograph, cover a wide range of topics related to the Tōdaiji reconstruction during the late Heian and early Kamakura Periods. The robust art historical record compensates for the scarcity of writings by Chōgen’s own hand regarding the rebuilding phase. However, the essays the accompanying catalogs were all written by art historians rather than historians of religion, and thus my approach to Chōgen in this dissertation will be different. My primary concern is the examination of Chōgen as a Buddhist monk who used sculpture, reliquaries, and other art objects to build a large network of aristocratic patrons, assistants, laborers, and monks to contribute their finances, authority, and exertion to the reconstruction of Tōdaiji. From this perspective, the art Chōgen commissioned was one of several means he employed to create the first sizable Buddhist social network of its kind in Japan.

This dissertation develops two distinct lines of inquiry. First, how did Chōgen's position as solicitor general for the rebuilding of Tōdaiji benefit from his Chinese travels and experiences? Sources about Chōgen's continental journeys are limited since he left sparse records of his own and no dharma heir to commemorate his achievements. In order to fill in the blanks, I look to Chinese models from the Southern Song 南宋 Dynasty (1127-1279) for Chōgen's socio-religious networking activities. After arguing that these activities had few precedents in Japan, I examine religious networking activities in the Jiangnan 江南 region where Chōgen is either known or presumed to have traveled, activities that shared a high degree of structural similarity to those eventually introduced to Japan by Chōgen. Uncovering the vestiges of Chōgen's socio-religious efforts in China helps us to form conclusions regarding the nature and purpose of Chōgen's undertakings and how they facilitated the Tōdaiji reconstruction.

Second, how did Chōgen's Pure Land ideology undergird his campaign to rebuild Tōdaiji? Until recently, scholarship on medieval Buddhism has tended toward a sectarian gloss that divides emerging patterns of medieval Pure Land practice from established forms of Buddhism in Nara, Kyōto 京都, and Kōyasan 高野山. In reality, Pure Land ritual had thoroughly permeated the Esoteric Buddhist practice Chōgen rehearsed both as a novice monk at Daigoji 醍醐寺 and as a young ascetic on Mt. Ōmine 大峰山. Chōgen leveraged the pervasiveness of Pure Land thought within the Esoteric tradition to instill karmic affinity between his disciples and Amitābha Buddha (the Buddha of the Western Pure Land), as well



as Mahāvairocana (the cosmic Buddha worshipped in Esoteric Buddhism<sup>10</sup> and symbolized by the Tōdaiji Great Buddha statue). By coupling the reconstruction of the temple with the soteriological fates of his disciples, Chōgen created a strong sense of organizational commitment for the project among the members of his network.

The above lines of inquiry, as well as other aspects of Chōgen’s life and the rebuilding of Tōdaiji are presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 begins with Chōgen’s early days and his voyages to the continent by situating his proclivities within the context of a proliferation of Chinese influences upon mid-Heian Period Buddhism. Since some scholars have doubted that Chōgen ventured to China, I explore their arguments and offer rebuttals. I then survey the general means and motivations of monks who traveled to China around Chōgen’s time. Chōgen, along with many later monks who adopted similar itineraries, sailed across the East China Sea aboard Song merchant ships departing from Hakata 博多, the primary trade port on the west coast of Japan. One of the primary reasons for his voyages was probably to seek complete copies of the Song printed canon, which was still rare in his country at the time. The chapter ends with documentation of Chōgen’s pilgrimages to two religious sites: Tiantaishan 天台山, east of the port city of Ningbo 寧波 where he disembarked, and Ayuwangshan 阿育王山, to the southwest of the same city.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the Chinese precedents for Chōgen’s later religious networking activities. It opens with a comparison of Chinese and Japanese “tales of rebirth” literature (*C. Wangshengzhuan, J. Ōjōden* 往生傳), contending that the literature’s scope is

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10. Esoteric Buddhism is also known as “Shingon” 真言, the Japanese name for the Esoteric school, and *mikkyō* 密教, the esoteric teachings that contrast the *kenkyō* 顯教 exoteric teachings of the Nara schools. “Esoteric Buddhism,” “Shingon,” and “*mikkyō*” are largely synonymous for the purposes of this dissertation.

indicative of a wider institutional support for common, lay practitioners of Pure Land Buddhism in China than in Japan, a difference Chōgen noted during his travels. I continue by describing Pure Land halls popular in Song China that influenced the Pure Land sanctuaries (*bessho* 別所) Chōgen later constructed in Japan. Finally, I explore aspects of institutional Pure Land societies and popular lay confraternities that served as structural templates for Chōgen’s own Pure Land network geographically interconnected through his *bessho*.

Chapter 3 concerns aspects of Chōgen’s coordination of the recasting of the Great Buddha and the Tōdaiji reconstruction. I first detail the enormous economic and technological hurdles that required state intervention at the highest levels in order to overcome. I then attempt to understand Chōgen’s simultaneous interpretation of the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana and Amitābha, and show how this interpretation underpinned the objectives for his Pure Land society. Next, I examine how Chōgen established Pure Land sanctuaries on estates providing income for the Tōdaiji reconstruction in order to develop a network of devotees, not only across the capital region, but also through the provinces. This network included representatives of the rival Taira and Minamoto clans that Chōgen reunited through the common cause of Pure Land rites for the war dead. Lastly, I discuss ways in which Chōgen sought legitimation for his activities through “good works” public service projects he engineered in regions near Tōdaiji estates, as well as through comparisons to the original campaign supervisor for the construction of Tōdaiji in the 8th century, the monk Gyōki 行基 (668-749).

Chapter 4 details the two-tiered organization of Chōgen’s Pure Land network based on the prototype he observed at Yanqingsi 延慶寺 in Ningbo. Chōgen encouraged a

collective identity among his first tier of close associates by bestowing “Amidabutsu 阿弥陀仏<sup>11</sup> names” that connected each individual in the network with Amitābha Buddha, and ultimately, Mahāvairocana. A similar set of correspondences operated for members of the network’s second tier, composed of donors and common devotees. I view Chōgen’s networking strategies through several sources, including his will and *kechien* lists of sponsors from Buddhist statues associated with his Pure Land society.

The dissertation concludes by recapitulating Chōgen’s accomplishments within the context of his contributions to a developing East China Sea religious macroculture that transcended the normative boundaries between China and Japan during the late Heian and early Kamakura Periods.

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11. “Amida(butsu)” 阿弥陀仏 is the Japanese name for Amitābha, the Buddha of the Western Pure Land.

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Precursors: Sino-Japanese Buddhism in the Late Heian, Chōgen's Early Life, and His Voyages to China**

In addition to the reconstruction of Tōdaiji, Chōgen was most well-known for his three trips to China that distinguished him from his contemporaries. However, historically Chōgen was far from the first Buddhist monk to earn renown from such a voyage. The history of mid-Heian Period religion can be read from the perspective of a growing fascination with continental Buddhism by monastics and aristocrats alike. Religious exchanges between China and Japan during the period helped to forge a synchronicity of Buddhist doctrine and practice on both sides of the East China Sea. One aspect of this process was the monopolization of forms of continentally inspired Buddhist devotion by regents and retired emperors, particularly when it came to the construction of temples and pagodas in Chinese or Liao 遼 (907-1125) architectural styles. In what other ways did renewed interest in continental Buddhism emerge during the mid-Heian Period, and how did this pivot toward the continent set the stage for Chōgen's own travels?

#### **The pivot toward Continental Buddhism in the mid-Heian Period**

Nara and early-Heian society owed much to the importation of Chinese cultural constructs: training in the Confucian classics was compulsory for government officials, literary production was dominated by the Chinese language, and the very organization of the state was borrowed from Tang administrative and legal codes (*J. ritsuryō* 律令). However, Buddhism was kept at bay after the capital moved to Heiankyō 平安京, present-day Kyoto,

as initially few temples were permitted in the environs of the new political center. Confucians turned a suspect eye toward the spread of Buddhist ideas, and even Emperor Shōmu, who constructed Tōdaiji as the center of his effort to develop a network of state monasteries and nunneries (*kokubunji* 国分寺, *kokubun'ni* 国分尼寺), found it difficult to promote Buddhism while satisfying the Confucian agendas of his literati-officials.<sup>1</sup>

By the mid-Heian period, the Japanese state's official posture towards Buddhism had begun to thaw, with the hegemonic Confucian discourse about government slowly replaced by the concept of the “oneness of the king's (or emperor's) dharma and the Buddhist dharma” (*ōbōbuppō* 王法仏法). During the same period, trade with China expanded due to the political stability brought by the Song 宋 unification in 960. Japanese Buddhist monks, who had not been able to travel officially to China since formal relations between the two countries chilled in 838, could now occasionally embark on imperially sanctioned pilgrimages to the famous sites of Buddhist devotion recorded by their predecessors more than one hundred fifty years before.<sup>2</sup> These “Buddhist monks in search of the law” returned with knowledge of developments in continental Buddhist culture during the 9th and 10th centuries, including translations of scriptures, new commentaries, and material objects of worship. Such monks often returned to a warm, if not festive, welcome by the Japanese authorities.

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1. Abé (1999), p. 19-21.

2. Wang, p. 63. Some monks such as Jōjin 成尋 (1011-1081) traveled to China without official license from the Japanese authorities (see Borgen), and so it remains possible that some monks' journeys have not been recorded for posterity.

One of the most celebrated of such monks was Chōnen 趺然 (938-1016), who traveled to China in 983 to survey Buddhist developments on the continent since the last state sponsored transmissions of Buddhism to Japan. After visiting Tiantaishan, Bianjing 汴京 (the capital, now Kaifeng 開封), and Wutaishan, where he apparently established a name for himself among his Chinese peers, Chōnen is said to have met with the Chinese emperor on three separate occasions. His prestigious connections no doubt greatly assisted him in his quest to acquire Buddhist items of exquisite value, with which he returned to Japan in 987. These included remains of the Buddha's body stored in a reliquary traced to the Indian King Aśoka and composed of the seven precious materials (*qibao hechengta* 七寶合成塔),<sup>3</sup> a complete copy of the Buddhist canon, and the famous statue of Śākyamuni kept at Seiryōji 清涼寺 in Kyoto.<sup>4</sup> Chōnen's acquisitions made such an impression on the authorities that they organized a parade for the monk and his Buddhist treasures through the capital along the Suzakuōji (Shujakuōji) 朱雀大路, the central road running from the south central gate of the city northward to the imperial palace. The parade marched to the accompaniment of musicians performing court music from the three countries of Goryeo 高麗, China, and Japan. Local monks and lay men and women, eager to personally benefit from Chōnen's exotic religious treasures infused with the divine powers of another land, affixed notes to the Śākyamuni statue, probably bearing their own wishes. Chōnen's triumphant return highlights

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3. The precise list of seven treasures is given variously in different sources, but for example in the *Lotus Sutra* includes: gold 金, silver 銀, lapis lazuli 瑠璃, cornelian 硨磲, emerald 瑪瑙, pearl 眞珠, and black mica 玫瑰 (*DDB*).

4. These items are recorded in the *Shōyūki* 小右記, Vol. 1, p. 119. Also see Kamikawa, p. 27. For more on Chōnen's visit, see: Wang Zhenping. "Chōnen's Pilgrimage to China, 983—986," *Asia Major*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1994), p. 63-97.

the extent to which Song Buddhism provoked interest among all classes of Japanese society at the time – from the lowest through the ranks of government officials and the emperor himself.<sup>5</sup>

Sino-Japanese Buddhist exchange was not limited to material imports, nor was the exchange entirely unidirectional. The strengthening of Buddhist ties between the two countries also manifested in the domain of doctrinal exchange. According to Japanese records, Chinese merchant vessels made at least sixteen trips between the kingdom of Wuyue and Japan from 909 to 959.<sup>6</sup> In one of the most famous transactions, the Japanese monk Genshin 源信 (942-1017), disciple of the Tendai abbot, Ryōgen 良源 (912-985), and author of the *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集), sent his tract to China in order to establish correspondence with the Tiantai community and seek guidance regarding the interpretations of certain texts whose meanings were still debated in Japan. A reply arrived in 995 in the form of a letter from the Fengxiansi 奉先寺 monk, Yuanqing 源清, who had passed on Genshin's writings to the Chinese Tiantai abbot, Xianhe 暹賀. Yuanqing reciprocated with one of his own writings, the *Fahua shizhuzhi* 法華示珠指, as well as requests for books such as the *Fahua jing kaiti* 法華經開題 and the *Benchao wencui* 本朝文粹 that had been lost in China during the interregnum between the end of the Tang and the formation of the Northern Song.<sup>7</sup> Chinese Tiantai had suffered during this period, known as

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5. Kamikawa, p. 27.

6. Brose, p. 51.

7. For more on Tiantai textual exchanges between China and Japan during this period, see: Brose, Ben, "Crossing Thousands of Li of Waves: the Return of China's Lost Tiantai Texts," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2006 (2008)).

the Ten Kingdoms (*shiguo* 十國) in southern China, before stability was achieved under the Wuyue 吳越 Kingdom (907-978). In order to restock their libraries, Chinese Tiantai monks looked to the periphery of Japan and Korea to discover vanished texts. Later, in 1003, the Japanese monk, Jakushō 寂照 (962-1034), traveled to China to present Genshin's *Twenty-seven Questions about Tiantai* (*Tendaishū gimon nijūshichi kajō* 天台宗疑問二十七箇條) to Zhili, obtaining replies to Genshin's doctrinal concerns from the Tiantai abbot himself.<sup>8</sup>

Japanese officials showed growing interest in Chinese Buddhism, as well. Jakushō's disciple, Nenkyū 念救, who also made the journey to the continent, was invited for an audience with Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長, the Japanese regent and the country's most powerful politician, and asked to describe his voyage. Eventually Jakushō presented Michinaga with a copy of the Tang poet Yuan Zhen's 元稹 *Baishi wenji* 白氏文集 as well as a map of the layout of Tiantaishan. Nenkyū and Jakushō later served as liaisons between Michinaga and Tiantaishan, resulting in several valuable gifts from the Chinese mountain monastery to Enryakuji 延暦寺, including a statue of the Tiantai patriarch, Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), and a reliquary vase. Nenkyū was also said to have solicited donations from Japanese aristocrats with Michinaga's permission in order to assist financially with repairs at Dacisi 大慈寺 on Tiantaishan.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the 10th century, Northern Song and Japanese Buddhist practices had established thorough synchronicity. Concepts of “cultivating goodness” (C. *xiushan*, J. *shūzen* 修善) and “good works” (C. *zuoshan*, J. *sazen* 作善), core ideas in Song Buddhism,

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8. Kamikawa., p. 28.

9. *Ibid.*



had also become models for religious life in Japan. A prominent example is sutra burial (*kyōzuka* 經塚), made famous in the first instance by Michinaga, who buried a fifteen fascicle copy of the *Lotus Sutra* in a bronze receptacle on Kimpusen 金峰山 in 1007. In the dedication (*ganmon* 願文)<sup>10</sup> inscribed on the buried sutra receptacle, Michinaga writes that he is burying the relics of the *Dharmakāya* (埋法身之舍利), a reference to the *Lotus Sutra*'s request that it be treated as an extension of the Buddha's body as a replacement for relic worship. Generally speaking, the insertion of *kechien* 結緣 lists,<sup>11</sup> printed Buddhas (*inbutsu* 印仏), and other items into small, transportable pagodas<sup>12</sup> or statues increased rapidly during this period in Japan. While Michinaga's practice is sometimes considered uniquely Japanese, chronologically speaking his practice was synchronous with the exchanges of Tiantai practice and doctrine pursued by Genshin. These changes in lay approaches to Buddhist practice also corresponded with the importation of the statue of Śākyamuni imported by Chōnen to considerable fanfare, which contained Buddhist drawings, sutra scrolls, and several *kechien* lists. The monk Kakuchō's 覺超 (960-1034) *Shuzen kōshiki* 修善講式, which provided

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10. "A verse of vows, a prayer, a dedication, addressed to a god, buddha, or bodhisattva; usually written by an almsgiver on the occasion of a dharma-assembly" (*DDB*).

11. "*Kechien*," literally "making a connection," is a term used for establishing a karmic link with a Buddhist deity in order to further one's personal soteriological aims. This concept and instances of its practice will be explored more in the context of Chōgen's statuary in Chapter 4.

12. The pagoda is the East Asian model of the South Asian stupa, which were built historically to house relics of the Buddha's body. The original relics of the Buddha were thought to have been distributed to China and other countries in East Asia by King Aśoka, and so East Asian pagodas were also understood as reliquaries. Miniature pagodas were also fashioned in order to transport Buddhist relics or to function simply as receptacles. The Sino-Japanese word for pagoda, *ta* 塔 in Chinese or *tō* in Japanese, originally referred to a "tower." Thus, "pagoda" and "tower" are used interchangeably in this context to reference a tower-like reliquary based on the stupa precedent.

descriptions of Northern Song Buddhist practice, was probably also influential in this regard. Michinaga's sutra burial practice is thus tightly interwoven with a growing interest in the installation of texts inside Buddhist statues and reliquaries spurred by the reestablishment of religious exchange with China.<sup>13</sup>

The standardization of the practice of installing sutras and *kechien* lists in statues and other objects of religious devotion occurred over the course of the 11th century, and closely followed the Northern Song practices described in the *Shuzen kōshiki*. Examples of this increasingly popular practice include the Bhaiṣajyaguru (Yakushi 藥師) statue at Zensuiji 善水寺 in Shiga Prefecture,<sup>14</sup> for which more than fifteen monks and laypersons created a *kechien* group, recording their names on a list installed inside dated to 993. For the Maitreya statue at Mirokuji 弥勒寺 in Hyōgo Prefecture, names were written in ink on the back side of a hollow cavity in the statue, and included various lay donors numbering close to one hundred persons. Yet other examples include the seated statue of Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara from Kōryūji 広隆寺 dated to 1012,<sup>15</sup> and the seated Bhaiṣajyaguru statue from Saimyōji 西明寺 dated from 1047,<sup>16</sup> both in Kyōto. Many of these lists appear to

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13. Kamikawa, p. 30-31.

14. For a description of this statue and its contents, see Chūo kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (1967), p. 66.

15. See *ibid.*, p. 71.

16. See *ibid.*, p. 82.

contain both the names of aristocrats and common people, which demonstrates a new avenue of expression for the popular religious aspirations of the masses.<sup>17</sup>

The dedication of various items in groups of 84,000 based on the precedent of King Aśoka (304–232 BCE),<sup>18</sup> who allegedly ordered the creation of 84,000 Buddhist reliquaries, gained in popularity by the end of the 10th century. Examples include a commemoration service at Jitokuji 慈徳寺 in 988 for 84,000 small pagodas,<sup>19</sup> and a pledge at Gyōganji 行願寺 in 1018 to produce 84,000 copies of the *Lotus Sutra* and build 84,000 temples.<sup>20</sup> Later, in 1083, the octagonal nine-story pagoda at Hosshōji 法勝寺 was commemorated, likely based on a prototype observed by Chōnen in China.<sup>21</sup>

Entering the 12th century, Emperor Shirakawa (1053-1129), whose primary religious focus was Shingon Buddhism, initiated a policy of pagoda construction, which included Eastern and Western towers at Sonshōji 尊勝寺 in 1102, a three-story pagoda at the

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17. Kamikawa, p. 32.

18. This practice is explored in the context of Chōgen's reliquaries in Chapter 2. Aśoka united India under a single banner after a bloody campaign against his enemies, afterwards choosing Buddhism as his state religion. As part of his repentance, Aśoka legendarily fashioned 84,000 reliquaries, each of which contained remnants of the Buddha's body, and distributed them across the known world.

19. *Shōyūki* 小右記, Vol. 1, p. 142. See Kamikawa, p. 32.

20. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 20.

21. Recorded in the *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪鈔. See Kamikawa, p. 32.

Tobadono 鳥羽殿 in 1109, a Prabhūtaratna Tower (*Tahōtō* 多寶塔)<sup>22</sup> for the Tobadono in 1111, Prabhūtaratna Towers dedicated to Hachiman and the Tobadono in 1112, a clay stupa (*deitō* 泥塔)<sup>23</sup> for Ninnaji 仁和寺 in 1113, a pagoda for Kasuga Shrine 春日社 in 1116, a three-story pagoda for the Shirakawa no Izumidono 白河泉殿 in 1117, a pagoda for Saishōji 最勝寺 in 1118, 263,000 five-*sun* 寸 miniature pagodas for Hosshōji 法勝寺 in 1122, 20,000 miniature pagodas for Hosshōji in 1123, a pagoda for the Kannon'in 觀音院 at Ninnaji in 1124, a three-story pagoda for Enshōji 円勝寺 in 1126, five-story and three-story pagodas for Enshōji in 1127, and 100,000 miniature pagodas for Hosshōji and a Prabhūtaratna Tower for Entokuji 円徳寺 in 1128. The majority of these pagodas were built in and around the capital, and centered upon the geographical areas of Shirakawa 白河, Toba 鳥羽, and Omuro 御室.<sup>24</sup> Although none of these examples were octagonal nine-story pagodas as seen in China, visually and spatially they were rich in the contemporary Chinese Buddhist construction qualities seen in pagodas financed by Southern Song officials. The above examples of pagoda construction by Go-Shirakawa are thus further evidence of the growing synchronicity

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22. “A tower for Prabhūtaratna-tathāgata. Prabhūtaratna 多寶 is a Buddha who appears in the *Stūpa-saṃdarśana-parivarta* chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and who manifests seven jeweled stupas each 500 *yojanas* in height. Historically, this was a single-story modeled after the one described in the *Lotus Sutra*. Such towers were erected in China after 732, and in Japan after 1124. Originally, it had three stories, but later they were simplified to one-story towers, and contained images of Śākyamuni Buddha and Prabhūtaratna-tathāgata” (*DDB*).

23. “A medieval Indian custom was to make a small pagoda five or six inches high of incense, place scriptures inside, and make offerings to it. The esoterics adopted this custom, and worshipped it for the purpose of prolonging life and ridding themselves of sins or sufferings” (*DDB*).

24. Kamikawa, p. 32.

of Buddhist practice in Japan and on the continent during this period – in this case in the realm of government policy towards the religion.

At the beginning of the 12th century, the political reshaping of Japan by Shirakawa, which coincided with significant changes in the concentration of power on the continent, resulted in a new configuration of continental-Japanese Buddhist relations. Shirakawa fought to restrain the influence of the Fujiwara regents (*sekkanke* 摂関家) over the imperial institution, establishing a line of rule by retired emperors known as the *insei* 院政. Shirakawa's policies significantly expanded his own powers relative to his Heian imperial predecessors. Shirakawa's policies were also felt in the Buddhist sphere, as the primary political patronage of Buddhism shifted from Tendai Buddhism, favored by the Fujiwara regents, to Shingon, which had embraced the imperial institution since the time of Kūkai through the establishment of imperial rituals that metaphorically linked secular rule with Buddhist soteriology.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneous with these political shifts in Japan, major political forces were at work on the continent from the end of the 11th century. In 1085, the Northern Song emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1048-1085) died. His most lasting legacy was his support for Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1021-1086) liberal economic reforms, which had been hotly debated at the Chinese court. Shenzong's death resulted in factionalism by Wang's supporters and detractors, and marked a decline in the Northern Song state that ended with the Jurchen invasions in 1125. The Jurchen expanded to conquer the Xixia 西夏 and the Liao 遼 in 1125, Goryeo in 1126, and the northern territories of the Song by 1127.

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25. See Abé (1999), p. 323-357 for more information on Kūkai's contribution to this process.

How did these events relate to the growing interconnection between the “Buddhisms” of East Asia? While northeast Asia fractured politically, from a Buddhist perspective, the period was characterized by a consolidation of texts and their doctrines through the research of the monk Uicheon 義天 (1055-1101), the fourth son of the Goryeo King Munjong 文宗. As political strife and warfare resulted in the loss of Buddhist texts in China, increasingly the only extant copies of those texts remained on the Chinese periphery – in Goryeo, Liao, and Japan.<sup>26</sup> Uicheon traveled across the continent collecting sutra commentaries and other Buddhist texts not included in the “complete canon” as organized at the time.<sup>27</sup> He edited a catalog that included more than three thousand fascicles of texts known as the *Newly Compiled Comprehensive Record of the Canonical Works of the Various Schools* (*Sinpyeon jejong gyojang chongnok* 新編諸宗教藏總錄). Uicheon’s reputation extended to Japan, where there are records of requests for his writings dating from 1095 made to Chinese traders living in Hakata. Some of these writings were imported and stored at Kōfukuji 興福寺 in 1097. From 1103, Uicheon’s tracts were copied at various Japanese temples, and in 1105 other texts listed in his catalog were requested by Ninnaji and Tōji, two Shingon temples sponsored by the *insei*.<sup>28</sup> One of the reasons for the Japanese interest in Uicheon was due to the inclusion of texts from the Liao in his catalog, since the Liao demonstrated a penchant for the Esoteric-inflected practices favored by the *insei*. Though the exact date is indeterminate,

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26. In this sense the period is comparable to the Tiantai search for lost texts in Japan at the end of the 11th century, mentioned above in the context of Genshin.

27. For more on Uicheon’s efforts, see Chae.

28. A more complete list of the influence of Uicheon in Japan from the period from 1086-1120 can be found in the chart in Kamikawa, p. 34-35.

a Liao text by the Wutaishan monk Dao(?) 道(厄\*爻),<sup>29</sup> the *Exoteric and Esoteric Essential Collection of Attaining Perfect Buddha Mind* (*Xuanmi yuantong chengfoxin yaoji* 顯密圓通成佛心要集), found its way to Japan during the *insei* period. This text explains dual exoteric-esoteric (*kenmitsu* 顯密) Buddhist practices for a lay audience, mirroring the conceptual understanding of Buddhist practice popular in Japan at the time. Kamikawa Michio 上川通夫 argues that this text is indicative of the Japanese interest in Liao texts spurred by Uicheon's catalog.<sup>30</sup> In any event, Uicheon's inclusion of Liao texts on similar subjects coincided with the *insei* period interest in Liao Buddhism. Based on requests for Uicheon's works from Japanese temples and officials, it seems that Uicheon's research was used as a reference to expand Japanese libraries to include recently produced texts about Esoteric Buddhism in north China.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, without the political destabilization of the continent, Uicheon may have never undertaken to compile his own catalog of Buddhist texts, and thus never encouraged the Japanese imperial interest in Liao Esoteric Buddhism.

The construction of pagodas influenced by Northern Song styles continued in Japan through the end of the 12th century, with some of these pagodas interring texts and including rites popular on the continent that were only transmitted to Japan following the establishment

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29. The second character used in this monk's name does not have a unicode equivalent and was extremely rare (or nonexistent) in Chinese. It may either represent a Khitan character or simply result from a transcription error.

30. See Kamikawa, p. 33. The text itself does not appear in Uicheon's catalog, however, and first appears in the Dazangjing in the *Qishazang* 磧砂藏 printing completed in 1234.

31. Kamikawa, p. 33. Ninnaji was built by Emperor Uda 宇多天皇 (867-931), who retired there to become the first *monzeki* 門跡, or aristocratic priest, of the temple. The management of Tōji was given to Kūkai in the 823 and it became the headquarters of the Shingon School in the capital.

of the Song. For example, in 1179, the Minister of the Left Fujiwara no Tsunemune 藤原経宗 (1119-1189), the Provisional Major Counselor (*Gondainagon* 権大納言) Fujiwara no Sanefusa 藤原実房 (1147?-1225), the Provisional Middle Counselor (*Gonchūnagon* 権中納言) Fujiwara no Tadachika 藤原忠親 (1131-1195), and the General of the Palace Guard (*Konoe no daishō* 近衛大将) Taira no Munemori 平正守 (1147-1185) undertook a pilgrimage to a “hundred pagodas” that entailed rituals that used printed Buddhas and the *Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī* (*Hōkyōin darani* 寶篋印陀羅尼).<sup>32</sup> The *Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī*, based on the *Dhāraṇī-sutra on the Treasure Chest Seal of the Whole Body Relics Concealed in the Minds of All the Tathāgata* (*Issai nyorai shin himitsu zenshin shari hōkyōin darani kyō* 一切如來心祕密全身舍利寶篋印陀羅尼經), was included in the majority of the 84,000 Aśoka pagodas manufactured by the Wuyue King, Qian Hongchu 錢弘俶 (929-988),<sup>33</sup> of which more will be said later. These types of large-scale, eccentric rites that characterized Buddhist practice through the *insei* period would have made an extraordinary impression upon Japanese audiences of the day, and owed much to Song models of Buddhist practice – their eccentricity deriving from the fact that models of Song practice had only recently found traction in Japan.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Kamikawa, p. 36-37.

33. Shi Zhiru, p. 102. There are actually two texts by this name included in the *Daizōkyō*: T19 n. 1022A and T19 n. 1022B. Both claim to be the translations of Amoghavajra during the Tang. However, the second text, n. 1022B, does not appear in any catalogs for the Buddhist canon until the *Shukusatsu zōkyō* 縮刷藏經, printed from 1880-1885 in Japan. Therefore, it seems that Qian Hongchu was most likely using version 1022A. It is less clear which version the Japanese used in the late Heian. The documents are similar in content, but have important differences.

34. Kamikawa, p. 36-37.



One final aspect of the increasingly favorable Japanese imperial reception of Buddhism from the mid-Heian includes the frequent adoption of Buddhist forms of self-stylization by Japanese emperors. While the concept of the *cakravartin*, or “Golden-wheel Turning Sage King” (*konrinjō’ō* 金輪聖王), was recognized in Kūkai’s time during the early Heian, favored metaphors for Japanese rulership gradually changed over the centuries from models based on Confucianism to the acceptance of the “joint flourishing of imperial power and Buddhism” (*ōbōbuppō* 王法仏法).<sup>35</sup> Strictly speaking, this began under Emperor Uda, who as mentioned took the tonsure under the Shingon master Yakushin 益信 (827-906) in 899 in order to realize the ideal of a “dharma emperor” (*hō’ō* 法王). From this time onwards, abdicated emperors received *abhiṣeka* baptisms, a tradition that continued until the end of the Tokugawa Period.<sup>36</sup> However, it was not until the end of the 10th century that emperors frequently began using the title “Golden-wheel Turning Sage King,” first adopted by Emperor Murakami in 955. Emperor Reizei 冷泉天皇 (950-1011) is referenced as the “Golden Wheel-Turning Sage King of the Great Country of Japan” (*Dai nihonkoku konrinjō’ō* 大日本国金輪聖王) in 1065. Yet another document from 1167 uses the epithet “Golden Wheel-Turning Sage King of the Great Country of Japan of Jambudvīpa” (南瞻部洲大日本国金輪聖王). These are only a few among many examples of this Buddhist inspired imperial nomenclature during this time.<sup>37</sup>

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35. Abé (1999), p. 81-83.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 376-377.

37. Kamikawa, p. 42-43.

The Japanese pivot toward continental forms of Buddhism from the mid-Heian Period not only impacted domestic forms of religious practice, but also stimulated consideration of Japan's own place within the Buddhist world. Rather than viewing the rest of the world from Japan as the center, there was growing awareness of the Japanese islands as a peripheral land separated by intermediary countries from the true nexus of human civilization, the Indian homeland of the Buddha. As seen in the 1167 document above, this becomes apparent in references to Japan as “Japan of the Jambudvīpa continent” (Nansenbushū Nihonkoku 南瞻部洲日本国 or Enbudai Nihonkoku 閼浮提日本国). According to Buddhist cosmology, Jambudvīpa is the southernmost continent of our world, Sahā (*J. shaba* 娑婆), and location of the familiar lands of human beings. This growing awareness can also be seen in the inscription for the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara statue studied by Ihara Kesao 井原今朝男.<sup>38</sup> Other evidence has been covered by Amino Yoshihiko 網野善彦, who argues that the designation of “Japan” as a country included in *ganmon*, written vows to the gods (*kishōmon* 起請文), epitaphs on stone monuments (*kinsekibun* 金石文), and Buddhist transmission documents for disciples (*inshin* 印信) from this period bear an increasing awareness of Japan as a country distinct from other countries in the world.<sup>39</sup> Such an awareness was not unlike the Copernican revolution that transformed our understanding of the earth's position in the solar system from a geocentric to a heliocentric model.

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38. Ihara Kesao 井原今朝男, “Chūsei Zenkōji no ichi kōsatsu” 中世善光寺の一考察, in *Chūsei no ikusa, matsuri, gaikoku to no majiwari* 中世のいくさ・祭り・外国との交わり, 1999.

39. Amino Yoshihiko 網野善彦, “*Nihon*” to wa nani ka 「日本」とは何か, 2000.

However, with this change in conceptual paradigm, there was also resistance to the idea of Japan's displacement from the center. Particularly from the time of the Mongol invasions, detractors claimed that Japan was the true "divine country" (*shinkoku* 神国), not because of some original essence, but because Buddhism had faded in the Indian homeland, and Chinese and Korean civilization risked effacement at the hands of Mongol marauders. This left Japan, more or less by default, as the new "homeland" of Buddhism through a process of transplantation. In this sense, the "divine country" model did not argue against the "heliocentric" world view, but simply moved the sun. This could not become more true as medieval Buddhist doctrine postulated the equivalence between Japan's supreme *kami*, Amaterasu 天照, and the universal Buddha, Mahāvairocana, whose name was translated simply as "Great Sun" (Dainichi 大日), and simultaneously referenced the "Land of the Rising Sun" – Japan.

The historical shifts in the spheres of politics, religion, and identity in Japan during this period had already proceeded apace by the time Chōgen arrived onstage. Many of the above developments in the history of Sino-Japanese exchange no doubt shaped Chōgen's understanding of Chinese Buddhism and motivated his travels to the continent, but the circumstances of Chōgen's early life helped to shape his aspirations into reality.

### **Chōgen's early life**

The details of Chōgen's life were never recorded in significant detail during the time he lived, and thus his early days must be pieced together from many sources. Chōgen is said to have been born into the Ki 紀 clan with the lay name "Shigesada" 重定, grandson of the literati Ki no Haseo 紀長谷雄 (845-912), and son of Ki no Sueshige 紀季重. This account is

recorded in a relatively late source from 1702, the *Biographies of Eminent Monks of This Realm* (*Honchō kōsōden* 本朝高僧伝),<sup>40</sup> though several other records repeat this information. There are reasons to doubt this account, however, in addition to the fact that this chronicle was composed several centuries after Chōgen's death. The biography of Chōgen from this compilation claims that he was the third-ranked officer of the guard at the Ministry of Justice (*Gyōbu saemon jō* 刑部左衛門尉) before retiring from secular life. This does not tally with other records, which say Chōgen took his vows at the tender age of thirteen, nor with Chōgen's autobiographical account in the *Sazenshū*, which mentions that he embarked on a long pilgrimage by age seventeen, presumably after already joining the sangha.

According to the 14th century genealogical text, the *Sonpi bunmyaku* 尊卑分脈, Chōgen's grandfather was not Ki no Haseo, but Ki no Suesuke 季輔, who was the brother of Tokisuke 時輔,<sup>41</sup> appointed the governor of Yamato Province (*Yamato no kami* 大和守) in 1151. The *Chūyūki* 中右記, from the late 11th or early 12th c., describes both a Taira no Suesuke 平季輔 and a Ki no Suesuke being conferred the Fifth Rank by the court in 1129, substantiating the latter family's aristocratic standing. The *Sonpi bunmyaku* also lists Chōgen's father as Ki no Sueshige 季重, and a member of the palace guard (*takiguchi no masha* 滝口武者).<sup>42</sup> This scanty background remains the only information we have to draw upon for Chōgen's early life, but I follow previous scholars in assuming that Chōgen was the descendent of this warrior family.

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40. *Honchō kōsōden*, in *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, Vol. 103, p. 829b-830a.

41. See lineage chart in Kobayashi, p. 2-3.

42. Gomi, p. 59-60.

Chōgen entered into monastic life at Daigoji, a renowned Shingon institution on the southeastern periphery of Kyoto. Chōgen corroborates this fact in his *ganmon* on the occasion of the eye-opening ceremony of the Great Buddha in 1185.<sup>43</sup> The official positions held by his father and grandfather would have provided the connections necessary to place Chōgen at this prestigious temple. As to the reason why Chōgen would have entered a monastery, he is listed with two brothers in the *Sonpi bunmyaku*. Placing one son in the sangha, outside the family lineage, would have been a logical decision for a father with three sons. Why Chōgen entered Daigoji in particular is never stated; however, later events in Chōgen's career reveal significant patronage from the Murakami Genji 村上源氏 clan, who were also the temple's chief patrons. It is possible that Chōgen's father served the Murakami Genji in the line of his professional duties and asked them to support his son's appointment.<sup>44</sup>

Upon entering temple life, Chōgen became the disciple of Gen'un 源運 at Upper Daigoji 上醍醐寺. We know little of his next few years, but at age seventeen, Chōgen says that he accomplished the Shikoku pilgrimage (*shikoku henrō* 四国辺路).<sup>45</sup> At nineteen, he engaged in ascetic practices at Ōmine 大峰, the mountain monastery founded by En no Gyōja 役行者 (634-701) in the late 7th century and known for its rigorous tests of spiritual devotion that generate religious power and insight. Writing much later in life, Chōgen described his

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43. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 32-34.

44. Gomi, p. 60.

45. A pilgrimage of sites associated with the Shingon founder, Kūkai, which over time developed into a pilgrimage of eighty-eight temples across the island of Shikoku.

time on Ōmine as a solitary existence, with the autumn moon his only friend.<sup>46</sup> Unlike most aristocratic monks of his day, who aspired toward the relatively comfortable life of high-ranking priests in the capital, Chōgen aimed to become a *hijiri*, a wandering Buddhist saint.

What was Chōgen's practice on Ōmine like? One of the most famous records of the austerities practiced on Ōmine is the account of the 12th century wandering *hijiri*, Saigyō 西行 (1118-1190) from a *Collection of Notable Tales Old and New* (*Kokon Chomonjū* 古今著聞集), a Kamakura Period anthology of *setsuwa* 説話 narrative tales. There, Saigyō describes being beaten with a cane by his comrades so that he understood the sufferings of hell, enduring starvation so that he would know the sorrow of hungry ghosts (*gaki* 餓鬼), and carrying heavy satchels across the mountainous peaks and deep valleys so that he would have empathy for beasts of burden. Through these experiences, Saigyō developed compassion for those born into the three lower realms of reincarnation – the paths of hell, hungry ghosts, and animals. Day and night he performed recitations, read from the *Repentance Sutra* (i.e. the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra*), and expunged his sins in order one day to realize the Pure Land. The task left unaccomplished after his first trial, Saigyō undertook these tests a second time, earning the name “the twice practitioner of Ōmine.”<sup>47</sup>

Chōgen surpassed Saigyō by undertaking ascetic practice on Ōmine *five* times. He briefly describes his own life during this period in a passage in the *Sazenshū*:

At age nineteen, I practiced austerities on Ōmine for the first of five times. On three occasions, deep in the mountains, wearing paper clothes (*kamiko* 紙

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46. *Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 490.

47. Gomi, p. 62.

衣),<sup>48</sup> I provided writing paper and copied the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*. On two of the occasions on Ōmine, along with ten chanters, I performed quick recitation<sup>49</sup> of the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* one thousand times. Starting on Kumano 熊野 and also on Kinpusen 金峰山, I chanted the *saraishite saru* 作禮而去 text of the *Lotus Sutra*,<sup>50</sup> and on Kongōsan 金剛山 (here called “Katsuragisan” 葛木山) twice chanted the *Lotus Sutra* one thousand times.<sup>51</sup>

Like Saigyō, Chōgen relentlessly engaged in Buddhist austerities of the body and mind for years in his late adolescence and early adulthood.

Such trials were not unknown for Daigoji monks. The Daigoji founder, Shōbō 聖宝, himself engaged in mountain and forest asceticism, studying with Kūkai’s disciple, Shinga 真雅. Seeking sacred ground, Shōbō hiked through the mountain wilderness and settled upon the region to the southeast of the capital on Kasatoriyama 笠取山, where he built the temple that became Daigoji. Shōbō was also the founder of the Shūgendō 修験道 Buddhist ascetic

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48. Paper clothes were a common form of apparel in the Heian worn by warriors, literati, and monks.

49. “*Tendoku* 轉讀 specifically refers to turning the pages of the text and briefly chanting the title, along with lines from the beginning, middle, and ending portions. Especially noted as a practice for the reading of such large scriptures as the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, it was distinguished from ‘real reading’ (真讀)” (DDB).

50. “*Saraishite saru*,” “Bowed in obeisance and departed,” are the final words of the *Lotus Sutra*. In context, the *Sutra* reads, “When the Buddha preached this sutra, Samantabhadra and the other bodhisattvas, Śāriputra and the other voice-hearers, along with the heavenly beings, dragons, human and nonhuman beings – the entire membership of the great assembly were all filled with great joy. Accepting and upholding the words of the Buddha, they bowed in obeisance and departed” (translation by Watson, p. 324). Presumably Chōgen means that he recited the conclusion of the *Sutra* or some other form of textual summarization.

51. *Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 490. Also see Gomi, p. 63. Kobayashi’s text of Chōgen’s *Sazenshū* originates from the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku* 東大寺俗続要録, written between 1281 and 1300 (Mass, 1982, p. 45, note 1). The *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku* is considered a credible source. The passage translated here is also translated in Rosenfield, p. 224, though he ignores the phrase “*saraishite saru*” and offers several other minor differences in interpretation. In general, for this dissertation I have retranslated passages from the *Sazenshū*.

tradition associated with Yoshino 吉野.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Chōgen's eremitic pursuits had a long tradition of practice by monks from his home temple.<sup>53</sup>

Chōgen was an upholder of the *Lotus Sutra* (*jisha* 持者), copying and chanting it as part of his ascetic routines on Ōmine. His deep faith in the *Lotus Sutra* is reiterated in a narrative tale from the *Kokon Chomonjū*, which says that while Chōgen was copying the *Lotus Sutra* at Daigoji, a dharma teacher wearing persimmon-colored robes appeared and followed him during his mountain austerities. According to the story, this dharma teacher was actually a *tengu* 天狗, a type of troublesome demon. The story gave birth to the idea that such supernatural creatures protected those who reproduced the *Lotus Sutra* through chanting or copying.<sup>54</sup> The merit associated with copying the *Lotus Sutra* is of course discussed abundantly in the text itself, but is also the topic of the *Japanese Record of Experiences with the Lotus Sutra* (*Dai nihonkoku hokkekyō genki* 大日本国法華経験紀), written by the Hieizan monk Chingen 鎮源 (active mid-11th c.). Most of the tales in Chingen's work concern monks from Enryakuji, but he includes two monks from Daigoji. According to Chingen's account, the Daigoji monks practiced recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* exclusively, and

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52. For Shōbō's biography, see *Shōbō sōshōden* 聖宝僧正伝, in Hanawa Hokiichi 塙保己一, ed. *Gunsho Ruijū* 群書類従. Manuscript in digital edition from Historiographical Institute, University of Tokyo (Tōkyō daigaku shiryō hensanjo 東京大学史料編纂所). <<http://wwwap.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ships>>.

53. Gomi, p. 64.

54. Originally a construct of Japanese folk religion, *tengu* were at first considered baleful demons by Buddhists, but gradually became absorbed by the religion and transformed into protectors of the *dharma*.



their single-minded focus led to penetrating insight into the sutra's meaning.<sup>55</sup> While a Tendai author would naturally be inclined to accentuate the importance of the *Lotus Sutra* for monks from temples outside the Tendai establishment, such tales probably retain a core of truthfulness, demonstrating the high regard for the *Lotus Sutra* at Daigoji, too.

In the *Japanese Record of Experiences with the Lotus Sutra*, mountain and forest asceticism is also a common feature of those monks who uphold the sutra. For example, the text tells of the monk Chōen 長円, who entered the wilderness of Kongōsan 金剛山,<sup>56</sup> and for twenty-seven days fasted and recited the sutra. In a dream, eight *vajra*-messengers (*kongō dōji* 金剛童子)<sup>57</sup> appeared and instructed Chōen to recite the *Sutra* if he was ever lost. When Chōen did in fact lose his way, he followed their advice and recited the *Sutra*, after which the *vajra*-messengers appeared again, showing him the correct path. Such tales fix Chōgen's dual ascetic and *Lotus Sutra* practice within a longer tradition that combined the two, a tradition observed by monks not only from Hieizan but also Chōgen's home temple of Daigoji.<sup>58</sup>

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55. Gomi, p. 63-65.

56. Chōgen also says he practiced on Kongōsan, quoted above.

57. A "messenger of the buddhas or bodhisattvas; also an incarnation of Amitābha in the form of a youth with fierce looks holding a vajra" (*DDB*).

58. Gomi, p. 65-66.

### *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra*

When Chōgen and others from his day referenced the *Lotus Sutra* as a text guiding their practice, they were not merely alluding to the main text, the most popular translation being Kumarajiva's 406 CE version, the *Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Dharma* (*Myōhō renga kyō* 妙法蓮華經). Rather, they were alluding to the “complete” *Lotus Sutra*, a trilogy of texts of which the “concluding sutra” provided the most comprehensive guide for realizing the teachings discussed in the main text.

The *Sutra of Meditating on Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* (*J. Kan fugen bosatsu gyōhō kyō* 觀普賢菩薩行法經),<sup>59</sup> translated in the 5th century by the Kashmir monk Dharmamitra (*C. Tanmomiduo* 曇摩蜜多), was regarded as the concluding sutra (*C. jiejing*, *J. kekkyō* 結經) for the *Lotus Sutra* from an early time in China. This assessment was reached based on several grounds: (1) the final chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, Chapter Twenty-Eight, is the *Encouragement of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra* (*Fugenbosatsu kanbotsuhon* 普賢菩薩勸発品), which formed a natural segue to the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra*; (2) the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* mentions the efficaciousness of the *Lotus Sutra* several times and describes itself both as an accompaniment and a practical text for realizing the *Lotus Sutra*'s teaching; and (3) the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* is set three months before the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, which chronologically places it immediately subsequent to the sermon delivered on Vulture Peak in the *Lotus Sutra*. Along with the *Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings* (*J. Muryōgikyō*), understood as the opening sutra (*kaikyō*

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59. Hereafter, *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra*.

開經), as well as the *Lotus Sutra* itself (the “main sutra” or *honkyō* 本經), the three sutras formed a trinity of texts treated as the “complete” or “threefold” *Lotus Sutra*.

The text of the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* itself describes the repentance practices that should be followed by practitioners in order to realize the Pure Land of the East. According to the text, the Buddha says:

“After [the practitioner] finishes confessing [his sins], he will attain the contemplation of being in the presence of all Buddhas (諸佛現前三昧). Having attained this contemplation, he will plainly and clearly see the Buddha Akṣobhya and the Kingdom of Wonderful Joy in the eastern quarter. In like manner he will plainly and clearly see the mystic lands of the buddhas in each of the ten directions. After he has seen the buddhas in all directions, he will have a dream: on [Samantabhadra’s] elephant’s head<sup>60</sup> is a *vajra*-man (金剛人) who points his *vajra* at the six organs [of perception].<sup>61</sup> After pointing it at the six organs, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva will preach to the follower the law of repentance to obtain the purity of the six organs. In this way the follower will do repentance for a day or three times for seven days. [Then] by the power of the contemplation of being in the presence of all Buddhas and by the adornment of the preaching of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, the follower’s ears will gradually hear sounds without impediment, his eyes will gradually see things without impediment, and his nose will gradually smell odors without impediment. This is as preached extensively in the *Lotus Sutra*. Having obtained the purity of the six organs, he will have joy of body and mind and freedom from evil ideas, and will devote himself to this Law so that he can conform to it. He will again further acquire a hundred thousand myriad *koṭis* of the *Dhāraṇī of Revolution* (旋陀羅尼)<sup>62</sup> and will again see extensively a hundred thousand myriad *koṭis* of innumerable buddhas. These world-honored ones will all stretch out their right hands, laying them on the head of the follower, and will speak thus: ‘Good! Good! You are a follower of the Mahāyāna, an aspirant to the spirit of great adornment, and one who keeps the

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60. Samantabhadra’s “mount” is the elephant, described earlier in the sutra.

61. Refers to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, which correspond to the six objects of perception – the visible, sound, odor, taste, touch, and mental objects.

62. A spell that endows the practitioner with extensive powers of evolution. This *dhāraṇī* is among the three *dhāraṇīs* taught in the *Lotus Sutra* (三陀羅尼), and known as the *dhāraṇī* of the teaching of emptiness (*DDB*).

Mahāyāna in his mind. When of old we aspired to Buddhahood, we were also like you. Be zealous and do not lose it! Because we practiced it in our former lives, we have now become the pure body of the all wise. Be diligent and not lazy! These Mahāyāna sutras are the repository of the Buddhist teachings, the eyes of the buddhas from all directions in the past, present, and future, and also the seed which produces the *Tathāgata* in the past, present, and future. He who keeps these sutras has the body of a Buddha and does the work of a Buddha; know that such a person is the emissary sent by the Buddhas, covered by the robes of the Buddhas, the world-honored ones. [Such a person] is a true *dharma*-heir of the Buddhas, the *Tathāgatas*. Practice the Mahāyāna and do not cut off the *dharma*-seeds! Attentively behold the Buddhas in the eastern quarter!’

“When these words are spoken, the follower sees all the innumerable worlds in the eastern quarter, whose lands are as even as one’s palm, with no mounds or hills or thorns, but with ground of lapis lazuli and with gold to bound the ways. So, too, is it in the worlds of all directions. Having finished beholding the ground [of this world], the follower will see a jeweled tree which is lofty, wonderful, and five thousand *yojanas* high. This tree will always produce deep gold and white silver, and will be adorned with the precious seven jewels; under this tree there will naturally appear a jeweled lion throne; the lion throne will be two thousand *yojanas* high and from the throne will radiate the light of a hundred jewels. In like manner, from all the trees and the other jewel thrones will naturally emerge five hundred white elephants, each elephant mount by Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.”<sup>63</sup>

Much of the description of the Pure Land in the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* fits the descriptions of Amitābha’s Pure Land in the *Three Pure Land Sutras*, the most important canonical sources in the Pure Land tradition.<sup>64</sup> Both describe the ground as flat and undisturbed by any hills, as well as composed from lapis lazuli. The *Contemplation Sutra* (*J. Kankyō 觀經*) also recommends the contemplation of the jeweled trees mentioned in the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra*. Notwithstanding the mention of the Eastern Pure Land of

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63. Adapted from the translation by Bunno Kato in *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, p. 217. See T9, n. 277, p. 390c23-391a21.

64. The *Three Pure Land Sutras* include (1) the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* (*J. Muryōju kyō 無量壽經*), (2) the *Amitābha Sutra* (*J. Amida kyō 阿彌陀經*), and (3) the *Sutra of the Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* (*J. Kammuryōju kyō 觀無量壽經*).

Akṣobhya rather than the Western Pure Land of Amitābha, the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* can be read as a text on the repentance practices necessary to obtain the Pure Land, and a further guide to practices discussed elsewhere in the Pure Land tradition.

The *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* was a popular religious text in the late Heian Period in Japan due to its connections with Pure Land practice and the *Lotus Sutra*. The Japanese monk Enchin 円珍 (814-891), nephew of Kūkai and the chief priest of Onjōji 園城寺, wrote his own accompaniment to the text, the *Kan fugen bosatsu gyō hōkyōki* 観普賢菩薩行法經記. The production of sutra copies with pages adorned by precious materials or written with valuable inks were also sponsored by aristocrats of the time in much the same way as the “main sutra.” Examples include a 12th c. mica-coated *kirabiki* 雲母引 copy with Chinese paper in book-form held by the Gotoh Museum 五島美術館,<sup>65</sup> and a 1180 CE copy personally created by Taira no Motochika 平基親 (? - 1212), a former Minister of the Military. The postscript to the latter text describes how Motochika became a Pure Land follower after he was decommissioned from his position by Kiyomori during the *coup d'état* against Go-Shirakawa.<sup>66</sup>

The *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* provides an important clue for understanding both Chōgen's early devotion to the *Lotus Sutra*, as well as his attraction to Pure Land Buddhism later in life. Chōgen's *Lotus Sutra* devotion consisted of chanting and copying the

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65. See online catalog listing at the Gotoh Museum website, 13 May 2016. <[http://www.gotoh-museum.or.jp/collection/col\\_03/01004\\_001.html](http://www.gotoh-museum.or.jp/collection/col_03/01004_001.html)>.

66. See online catalog listing for the Century Museum at the Century Cultural Foundation センチュリ文化財団 website, 13 May 2016, <[http://ccf.or.jp/jp/04collection/item\\_view.cfm?P\\_no=206](http://ccf.or.jp/jp/04collection/item_view.cfm?P_no=206)>.

text, but would have included the repentance rituals featured in the *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra*. Those repentance rituals not only served as a practical guide to elucidating the teachings of the main text, but also for achieving Pure Land rebirth. In this way, Chōgen's early practice was already infused by Pure Land Buddhism. This Pure Land focus probably helped shape his choice of destinations and activities while in China, and was certainly important for constructing his Pure Land network once he realized its value for the rebuilding of Tōdaiji.

#### *Aristocratic patronage*

By the 1150's Chōgen's Pure Land practice had extended beyond the confines of solitary pursuits to include organized Pure Land activities. According to the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen donated nine statues of Amitābha to a sub-temple of Daigoji known as the Kayanomori-dō in 1155.<sup>67</sup> The *Record of Various Affairs of Daigoji* (*Daigo zatsujiki* 醍醐雜事記) notes that Minister of Finance (Ōkurakyō 大藏卿) Minamoto no Moroyuki 源師行 funded the Kayanomori-dō, a two-story octagonal construction, which had a hall for the installation of nine *jōroku* statues of Amitābha, as well as a three story pagoda.<sup>68</sup> According to the research of Sugiyama Shinzō 杉山信三,<sup>69</sup> the two-story octagonal hall and the hall for the nine Amitābha statues were in fact separate buildings. It was the latter that was known as

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67. *Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 7.

68. *Daigo zōjiki*, Vol. 7, reprinted in Kobayashi, p. 7-8.

69. Sugiyama Shinzō 杉山信三, "Chōgen no kenchiku gihō to kayanomori iseki" 重源の建築技法と栢杜遺跡, *Bukkyō geijutsu* 仏教芸術, No. 105 (1976), p. 51-60.

the “Kayanomoridō.” The sub-temple functioned as a Hall of Constant Practice (*jōgyōdō* 常行堂) with Amitābha as the central image, which explains Chōgen’s donation of nine Amitābha statues, each representing one of the possible classes of rebirth according to the *Contemplation Sutra*.<sup>70</sup> This type of hall already had a long history in Japan: Saichō had planned to build one at Enryakuji, having first seen it during his short trip to China, but his goal was never realized.<sup>71</sup> The third Japanese Tendai patriarch, Ennin, also practiced at such a hall in China and constructed the first Japanese hall of its kind in Japan on Hieizan upon his return, fulfilling Saichō’s wish. Practice at the Hall of Constant Practice was varied, but included the “continuous recitation of Amitābha’s name” (*fudan nembutsu* 不斷念仏). As this type of practice grew in popularity, Halls of Constant Practice were constructed at temples across Japan. Excavations of the Kayanomoridō indicate that the architectural design of the building was based on Song precursors and resembled Chōgen’s later buildings connected with Tōdaiji, which suggests that Chōgen was responsible for its design and construction. If so, then Chōgen was already involved in organizing Pure Land activities by 1155, long before he began work on Tōdaiji.

The continuous recitation of Amitābha’s name was particularly popular with the aristocratic class during this time due to the widespread belief in Pure Land Buddhism and their connections with Hieizan and other aristocratic temples (*monzeki* 門跡) that had Halls of Constant Practice. As seen from the above episode, one of the aristocrats who provided

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70. Gomi, p. 70-71.

71. For more on the early development of this type of hall in Japan, see: McCullough, William H., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 509.

material assistance to Chōgen was Moroyuki, who funded the Kayanomori-dō. Moroyuki was an important figure in Chōgen's early life, becoming a lynchpin for the aristocratic connections and patronage Chōgen received throughout his career. He was a powerful figure in his day, serving as the governor of Yamashiro 山城 and Nagato 長門, and eventually the Minister of Finance.<sup>72</sup>

Moroyuki was instrumental as a link between Chōgen and the Murakami Genji 村上源氏 clan, of whom he was a member. The Murakami Genji traced their ancestry back to Emperor Murakami 村上天皇 (926-967) through his son, Prince Tomohira 具平親王 (964-1009), and the emperor's grandson, Morofusa 師房 (1008-1077), who was the first to adopt the clan name. Morofusa's two sons, in turn, were Toshifusa 俊房 (1035-1121) and Akifusa 顕房 (1037-1094). Akifusa's daughter, Kenshi 賢子 (964-1009) became empress to Emperor Shirakawa 白河天皇 (1053-1129), renewing the clan's connections to the sovereign. Moroyuki, Chōgen's direct benefactor, was the son of Morotoki 師時, placing Moroyuki just three generations removed from Prince Tomohira and the imperial family. According to the historical tale *Imakagami* 今鏡, Moroyuki's father was known as a great poet and the composer of a highly regarded diary, the *Chōshūki* 長秋記. A copy of his diary was eventually installed in the imperial residence, the Tobadono 鳥羽殿, by request of Retired Emperor Toba himself. Moroyuki's brothers would advance to important political positions, including Middle Councilor (*chūnagon* 中納言) in the case of Moronaka 師仲 (1116-1172), and Junior Councilor (*shōnagon* 少納言) in the case of Morokiyo 師清 (? -

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72. Gomi, p. 71.



1125).<sup>73</sup> Clearly Moroyuki and his immediate family were important political players at the court during this time.

Many of the members of the Murakami Genji clan rose to become abbots of Daigoji, including Jōkai 定海 (1074-1149, son of Akifusa), Genkai 元海 (1094-1157, grandson of Akifusa), and Shōkaku 勝覚 (1057 or 1058-1129, son of Toshifusa). One of the most prominent reasons for the Murakami Genji/Daigoji connection was Empress Kenshi, the previous matriarch of the family, whose ashes were interred there. Because of this, clan members attended regular memorial services at Daigoji for the late empress, and financed the construction of other Daigoji halls in addition to those funded by Moroyuki. For example, Masazane 雅実, another son of Akifusa, built the One Vehicle Hall (Ichijōin 一乗院) at Daigoji.<sup>74</sup> Over time, Daigoji became the clan temple for the Murakami Genji. The clan's affiliation also extended to Tōdaiji through its links with Daigoji, since Shōbō, the Daigoji founder, was once the abbot of the Tōnan'in, one of Tōdaiji's chief subtemples.<sup>75</sup>

In 1118, Moroyuki became governor of Yamashiro 山城 Province, a position in which he would serve until 1120. Following his father's death in 1136, Moroyuki successively held the posts of Major Assistant in the Ministry of Civil Administration (*Jibu no taifu* 治部大輔),<sup>76</sup> Junior Councilor in the Great Council of State (*Daijōkan* 太政官), and Major General

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73. A genealogical chart for the Murakami Genji family configured from the *Sonpi bunmyaku* 尊卑分脈, Vol. 10 is printed in Kobayashi, p. 9.

74. According to the *Sazenshū*, Masazane's remains were also interred at the Ichijōin (*Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 11).

75. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 168. For details on the Tōnan'in, see *ibid.* p. 167-173.

76. The second-highest rank in the ministry.

(*Shōshō* 少将) in the Imperial Guard (*Konoe* 近衛). His career began to advance quickly once he rose to the governorship of Nagato in 1142. In 1146, Moroyuki was charged with building the Takamatsudono gosho 高松殿御所 for the emperor, after which he earned a promotion to the Upper Fourth rank and tax exemption for estates.<sup>77</sup> That Moroyuki was chosen to oversee the construction of an imperial residence demonstrates the close relationship that he had formed with the emperor by this time. During the next year, he sponsored the commemoration of seven statues of Bhaiṣajyaguru (*J. Yakushi* 薬師) and a copy of the *Bhaiṣajyaguru sutra*<sup>78</sup> for the Konponchūdō 根本中堂, the main hall of Enryakuji. 1149 marked Moroyuki's appointment as Finance Minister.<sup>79</sup>

The circumstances of Chōgen's introduction to Moroyuki are unclear, but Chōgen probably came to Moroyuki's attention while at Daigoji for his unprecedented five trips to Ōmine, or while engaged as a ritual specialist at the Enkōin 円光院, a Daigoji subtemple. In addition to financing Chōgen's Hall of Constant Practice at the Kayanomori-dō, members of the Murakami Genji clan later became sponsors of Chōgen's reconstruction of Tōdaiji. One of Moroyuki's sons, Minamoto no Tokimori 源時盛, became governor of Suō Province in 1162. Probably not coincidentally, roughly two decades later, Suō was the location of estates donated to Chōgen in order to source logs and lumber products for the reconstruction of Tōdaiji's Great Buddha Hall. Such was Moroyuki's influence on Chōgen, that Chōgen even

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77. *Taiki* 台記, Vol. 6, p. 176. According to this diary, the Takamatsudono gosho residence also included a storehouse for valuables and rice.

78. *Yakushi rurikō nyorai hongan kōtoku kyō* 薬師琉璃光如來本願功德經. T14, n. 450.

79. Gomi, p. 74-75.

adopted Moroyuki's pseudonym. Moroyuki had styled himself "Shitaku ōkurakyō" 支度大蔵卿, or the "Finance Minister (Known for) Preparation," which accentuated the importance he placed on planning. Chōgen, in similar fashion, took the name, "Shitaku daiichi shunjōbō" 支度第一俊乗房, or "Abode of the excellent vehicle for whom preparation is foremost"<sup>80</sup> – a clear reference to his mentor. Chōgen's adoption of Moroyuki's pseudonym shows the high regard Chōgen held for him, as well as the practical lessons he learned from his benefactor.<sup>81</sup>

Moroyuki's assistance became crucial for Chōgen's later travels to the continent. A bell at Kōyasan sponsored as a memorial for two of Moroyuki's sons, the monk Shōkei 聖慶 (1153-1175) and his brother, Minamoto no Tokifusa 源時房, contains an inscription dated to 1176 that mentions Chōgen's three trips to China. This suggests a direct relationship between Chōgen's voyages and Moroyuki's family, and since we know Moroyuki sponsored several of Chōgen's other projects, we can assume that the bell commemorated Moroyuki's family's patronage of Chōgen's travels, as well.

Traveling to China was an expensive proposition, and without substantial financial backing, out of the question for most monks of the period. One of the most important facilitators for travel to China during this period was the Taira clan, which monopolized Sino-Japanese trade. There are several reasons to think that Chōgen may have shared connections

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80. Chōgen's pseudonym is mentioned in the *Hōnen shōnin gyōjō eden* 法然上人行狀絵 (see Gomi, p. 78). "Shunjōbō" 俊乗房, or "Abode of the excellent vehicle," was Chōgen's *bōgō* 房号 or "residence name," a pseudonym that became his primary reference in many historical documents rather than his dharma name. Here, the "excellent vehicle" in Chōgen's *bōgō* of course refers to the Mahāyāna, or just Buddhism more generally.

81. Gomi, p. 78.

to the Taira with the monk, Eisai 栄西 (1141-1215), whom Chōgen met in China and accompanied to Tiantaishan and Ayuwangshan.<sup>82</sup> The *Genkō shakusho* 元享釈書 lists as Eisai's benefactor (*danna* 檀那) Taira no Yorimori 平頼盛 (1132-1186), who in 1167 became the assistant director of Dazaifu (*Dazai no daini* 太宰大貳), an administrative center for trade in Kyūshū, in 1167. This coincides with the year both Eisai and Chōgen left for China. Additionally, Chōgen notes in his will, composed in 1197, that estates in Bizen were developed with the permission of Yorimori, who by that time had become the Bizen provincial governor.<sup>83</sup> Since Yorimori extended support to Chōgen during his later years, it seems reasonable that he also helped to arrange Chōgen's maritime voyages while serving in Dazaifu.<sup>84</sup>

While Eisai was abroad, Yorimori was transferred to the capital. One of his trusted retainers, Nakahara no Kiyonari 中原清業, became Dazaifu provisional governor (*mokudai* 目代) in his place.<sup>85</sup> Kiyonari and Eisai enjoyed a close relationship judging from the *Hōki no kuni daisenji engi* 伯耆国大山寺縁起, and Kiyonari was in a position to benefit his close acquaintances. He was an attendant to Go-Shirakawa, and after the death of Yorimori, helped to construct one of Go-Shirakawa's residences, the Rokujōdono 六条殿 (now known as the Chōkōdō 長講堂) in his capacity as provisional governor of Harima Province. Kiyonari also

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82. Kobayashi, p. 17. Reprinted from *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku* 東大寺続要録, *Kuyō* 供養 Volume.

83. *Yuzurijō*, in Kobayashi, p. 347-350.

84. Gomi, p. 90.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 91. See Mass (1992), p. 134-135 for a discussion on the precise meanings and translations of this administrative term.

assisted with repairs at Tōji.<sup>86</sup> Whether Kiyonari was connected with Chōgen is unclear, but since Eisai and Chōgen seem to have shared a relationship with Yorimori as a financial benefactor, they may have shared a similar relationship with Kiyonari, as well.

A final piece of Chōgen's patronage puzzle with the Taira was Taira no Munechika 宗親, who was the adopted son of Taira no Munemori 平宗盛 (1147-1185), and the biological son of Minamoto no Arihito, who had also adopted Moroyuki's son, Arifusa.<sup>87</sup> Following the defeat of the Taira during the Gempei War, Munechika took the tonsure and adopted the name "Shinkaibō" 心戒房. The *Enkyōhon heikei monogatari* 延慶本平家物語 says that Munechika accompanied Chōgen to China on one of his trips. By choosing Munechika as his associate, Chōgen would have likely benefited from Taira support for their voyage, as well as the Taira's connections with Song traders who made regular voyages from Hakata to Ningbo. When Munechika returned from China, he travelled itinerantly across Japan earning a

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86. Gomi, p. 91.

87. Moroyuki's surviving son, Arifusa 有房 served both Emperor Toba and his Empress, Bifukumon'in 美福門院 (1117-1160), and was also in service to the Taira, establishing more connections between Chōgen and the Murakami Genji, on one hand, and the Taira on the other. Arifusa's name does not share a character with his father, as would have been the normal practice, because he was adopted by Minamoto Arihito 源有仁 (1103-1147), the son of Prince Sukehito 輔仁親王 (1073-1119), and grandson of Emperor Go-Sanjō 後三条天皇. Arihito had decided to leave the imperial lineage and become a commoner. After Sukehito's death, Arihito was given a coming of age ceremony by Shirakawa in 1115, who treated him as his own son, bestowing upon him the surname "Minamoto" (Gomi, p. 79). The imperial family did not use surnames, and so to bestow a name was tantamount to removing that person from the imperial lineage. "Minamoto" and "Taira" were two of the primary surnames given to former princes for this purpose during the early and medieval periods. The most famous example of this in literature is of course Hikaru Genji 光源氏 from Murasaki Shikibu's 紫式部 (c. 973 or 978 – c. 1014 or 1031) *Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語). Genji is given his "Minamoto" name by the emperor in order to protect him from rival powers at the court that might otherwise remove him from by force. Arihito achieved renown in literary and art circles during Emperor Toba's reign, and the *Imakagami* favorably compares him to Genji.

reputation as a beggar monk. This attracted the sympathies of Taira no Tokuko 平徳子 (1155-1213), empress to Emperor Takakura 高倉天皇 (1161-1181), and a nun in her later years. Tokuko would become a donor for the Pure Land Hall at Tōdaiji built by Chōgen according to the *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki* 東大寺造立供養記, which suggests that Chōgen's relationship with Munechika continued during Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign for the Tōdaiji reconstruction.<sup>88</sup> Many of Chōgen's connections with the Murakami Genji and Taira are tangibly expressed on inscriptions for items inserted into the guardian statues carved for the Tōdaiji Great South Gate, of which more will be said in subsequent chapters.

As Chōgen benefited from his close connections to the Taira clan, it seems that some of his later activities in the Hakata region may have been aimed to appease them. According to the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen copied the *Lotus Sutra* and also built baths in Chinzei 鎮西 (Daizaifu),<sup>89</sup> which was governed by Taira no Yorimori for some time. The latter project was part of a larger undertaking to construct baths in fifteen locations across the country, but the decision to build a bath as an act of religious charity at Dazaifu in particular may have been motivated by a desire to reciprocate the Taira for their beneficence in Chōgen's earlier days.<sup>90</sup>

As should now be clear, Chōgen depended on the influence of both the Murakami Genji and the Taira to progress through institutional ranks as a young monk and to travel to the continent. Without Murakami Genji patronage, it seems unlikely that Chōgen could have entered such a prestigious institution as Daigoji, where they wielded authority. In time, his

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88. Gomi, p. 80.

89. *Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 494.

90. Gomi, p. 92.

patrons' optimism for his future was rewarded, as Chōgen exceeded the normal expectations for monks of minor noble families, successfully completing the ascetic trials of Ōmine and earning a reputation as a “*hijiri*” 聖, a saint infused with the powers of an enlightened bodhisattva. With the backing of his patrons, he was able to navigate the politics that dominated the aristocratically-striated temples of the capital, finding his way to Kōyasan in the 1140's.<sup>91</sup> Connections with the Taira clan Chōgen shared with Eisai proved equally useful as he aimed to travel to China.

### **The question of Chōgen's three trips to China**

Chōgen claimed to have made three trips to China, a feat which eclipsed the travels of any Japanese monk before him, as well as any monk for a long time thereafter. Most monks were lucky to make a single successful voyage, let alone multiple ones. For this reason, along with the lack of historical documentation that provides extensive detail about Chōgen's trips, scholars have doubted whether he made a voyage to China at all, or if so, how many and which destinations he visited while there. Many monks were known to keep diaries of their travels in China given the rarity of the experience, the most well-known being Ennin's 円仁 (794-864) account, *The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (*Nittō guhō junreikōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記),<sup>92</sup> which describes his experiences in China during the oppression of Buddhism under Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840-846) of the Tang. Moreover,

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91. Kobayashi, p. 7, reprinted from *Jōdoji kaisoden* 浄土寺開祖伝.

92. See *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, Vol. 113, p. 169-282. Translated into English by Edwin O. Reischauer as *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*.

upon their return to Japan, most monks were feted by the government, as was the case with the monk Chōnen 裔然 (? - 1016). However, in Chōgen's case, we have no account of his voyages either by his hand or his contemporaries, nor is there any record of Chōgen returning to Japan to a glorious reception, or to any welcome at all, for that matter. From a historical perspective, these differences between Chōgen and other monks who visited China are causes for hesitation in rushing to interpret the Chōgen record.

Though the lack of written descriptions about Chōgen's reception upon returning to Japan gives pause, it seems that Chōgen was in general not concerned with historical accounts of his life or accomplishments. The durability of the *Sazenshū* is itself something of a minor miracle – a text of less than two hundred lines written on the back of a report on the 1202 grain harvest in Bizen Province.<sup>93</sup> Not only was Chōgen uninterested in honoring his achievements, Chōgen also seems to have consistently downplayed the significance of the written word and doctrinal study in favor of pursuing a life of good works. This trend started from his early commitment to mountain and forest asceticism while still in his teens, and continued to manifest itself in Chōgen's commitment to Pure Land Buddhism later in life. Chōgen's focus on good works occupied the opposite end of the continuum from a preoccupation with doctrine and written texts. It was only late in life that Chōgen seems to have given any thought at all to the remembrance of his past accomplishments. This conclusion seems to fit with our understanding of the *Sazenshū* as the beginnings of a draft of Chōgen's autobiography interrupted by his death, and undertaken only as his strength had already begun to fail. In this context, the lack of self-documentation by Chōgen and the

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93. Rosenfield, p. 207.



rarity of accounts of his accomplishments told to others seems to have been a consistent throughout Chōgen's life. Chōgen's eyes were inexorably focused on the present.

The 20th century scholar Yamamoto Eigo 山本栄吾 raised the most serious challenge to Chōgen's claim to have visited China three times.<sup>94</sup> Yamamoto examined the three extant sources that mention Chōgen's voyages and noted several contradictions in the accounts, concluding that Chōgen concocted the story of his trips in order to obtain the distinctions bestowed upon previous monks who had made continental voyages. Since the question of whether Chōgen actually visited China is still debated, it is worthwhile addressing some of Yamamoto's concerns here.

The most complete account of Chōgen's trips to China appears in the diary of the aristocrat Kujō Kanezane 九条兼実 (1149-1207), who initially became a reluctant sponsor of Chōgen's campaign to rebuild Tōdaiji. In Kanezane's *Gyōkuyō* 玉葉 diary, Chōgen tells Kanezane that his original intention for visiting China, presumably on his first trip, was to make a pilgrimage to Wutaishan 五台山 in north China. However, because north China was controlled by the Jurchen (*J. Jōshin* 女真), who had established the Jin 金 Dynasty (1115-1234) by this period, Chōgen found it impossible to travel to the north and instead settled for pilgrimages to Tiantaishan 天台山 and Ayuwangshan 阿育王山, both in the Ningbo 寧波 region ruled by the Southern Song.<sup>95</sup> Yamamoto reads this section of

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94. Yamamoto Eigo 山本栄吾, "Chōgen nyūsōden shiken" 重源入宋伝私見, in Nakao Takashi and Imai Masaharu, ed., *Chōgen, Eizon, Ninshō* 重源・叡尊・忍性, Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003.

95. *Gyōkuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 593.

Kanezane's diary as a statement by Chōgen that he had only visited China once,<sup>96</sup> though Kanezane does not record Chōgen as saying this outright. In fact, during their conversation, Chōgen describes two separate pilgrimages to Ayuwangshan,<sup>97</sup> which can be interpreted as pilgrimages made during two separate trips to China. In any case, Kanezane's account nowhere contradicts other documentation that suggests that Chōgen made three voyages.

The more serious problem with Chōgen's account dictated to Kanezane is that the Jurchen began their invasion of the Northern Song in 1125 after breaking an alliance formed in 1121. By 1127 the Song had been pushed south of the Huai River 淮河. The Jurchen invasion occurred roughly three decades before Chōgen could have made his first trip to the continent. Yamamoto believes this continental upheaval would have made news in Japan in the meantime. According to his reasoning, since Chōgen was a monk at Daigoji, one of the most prominent temples in the capital, Chōgen would not only have learned of these dynastic-level changes, but also concluded that such turmoil would complicate his plans to visit Wutaishan. Finally, and perhaps most damningly, Yamamoto points out that a second record that mentions Chōgen's trips, the *ganmon* 願文 dedication presented on the occasion of the eye-opening ceremony for the Daibutsu in 1185, not only reasserts the claim that Chōgen visited China three times, but also explicitly says that he visited Wutaishan three times.<sup>98</sup> This seems to contradict Kanezane's account of his conversation with Chōgen, and could cast doubt on Chōgen's veracity more generally.

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96. Yamamoto, p. 42.

97. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 593-594.

98. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 32-34.

What should we make of these objections? Regarding Yamamoto's claim that Chōgen should have known about the establishment of the Jin Dynasty prior to his trip, while the Jurchen had in fact conquered north China decades before Chōgen's first voyage, knowledge of such political events did not necessarily permeate Japanese circles until decades later. Based on extant sources, there is no certain time frame during which the Jurchen invasions became common knowledge in Japan. Another possibility is that Chōgen may have been aware of Jurchen political control over north China and yet still believed prior to arriving on the continent that he could travel to Wutaishan. After all, Buddhism persisted as the most prevalent religion of the Jin Empire, and Wutaishan continued to flourish as a center of Buddhist learning and practice. Chōgen, as a monk in search of the Buddhist law and a foreigner whose country had few ties with the Jurchen, may have believed that he was immune to the political conflicts between the Jin and Southern Song, especially given the shared religious heritage between the Jin and his own country. If either of these possibilities is true – that Chōgen did not know of the Jurchen invasion or knew and still believed travel to the north was feasible – then we can understand Chōgen's account to Kanezane as intimating that he only understood the difficulties of traveling to Wutaishan after he arrived in China.

The claim referenced by Yamamoto made in the *ganmon* for the Daibutsu eye-opening ceremony, which says that Chōgen visited Wutaishan three times, is also difficult to resolve with certainty, though the claim does not necessarily imply devious intentions on the part of Chōgen. There are several ways of understanding that part of the *ganmon* text. First, it is possible, though unlikely, that Chōgen really visited Wutaishan three times. Such an understanding would seemingly contradict Kanezane's diary, but there are reasons not to privilege Kanezane's words, particularly concerning Chōgen. Kanezane's relations with

Chōgen worsened over time due to a perceived lack of credit Kanezane earned from donating his own Buddha relics for inclusion in the completed Daibutsu statue, and thus the *Gyokuyō* may demonstrate prejudice against Chōgen and his accounts of Chinese travels. There is little historical documentation on Wutaishan that can shed light on foreign pilgrimage to the temples there during this period, and therefore no basis for denying the claim made in the *ganmon* outright.

Second, Wutaishan enjoyed a particular status in the minds of Japanese Buddhists of the day, particularly within the Shingon school, as the abode of Mañjuśrī (C. Wenshu, J. Monju 文殊), the protector deity of China. Jingsi 金閣寺, founded by the Zhenyan (J. Shingon) patriarch Amoghavajra (J. Fukū 不空, 705-774), was given a special place within the Shingon tradition as part of the geographical heritage of their school. Consequently, the mention of “Wutaishan” in the *ganmon* document may not have been a literal reference, but rather a figurative reference to China on a whole: something on the order of “Chōgen traveled three times to China, renowned for Mañjuśrī’s holy mountain of Wutaishan.”

Another possible explanation for the mention of “Wutaishan” in the *ganmon* text is discussed by Nakao Takashi 中尾堯,<sup>99</sup> who argues that Chōgen may not have intended to say that he had traveled to Wutaishan in China, but rather that he traveled to Kimpusen 金峯山 on the Ōmine kaihō 大峰回峰 pilgrimage three times. Since Kimpusen and the gold color of its mountains had long been equated with the golden lands of Mañjuśrī’s paradise at Wutaishan in China, such metaphors were common. Perhaps the custodians of Chōgen’s words thus misinterpreted his metaphorical language in light of his fame as a traveler to

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99. See Nakao, p. 47-48.

China, confusing Kimpusen for Wutaishan. While this explanation seems possible if one assumes a significant mangling of Chōgen's original words, the *ganmon* for the eye-opening ceremony seems fairly unequivocal in providing context for Chōgen's statement: "I traveled afar to the country of the Great Song, and at all [the peaks] of Wutaishan offered worship to the miraculous light of Mañjuśrī; accomplishing three trips to the mountain I promptly sought the good fortune of the temple's vast foundation" (遙渡大宋國，諸五臺山而奉拜文殊之瑞光，就三遊山而早祐伽藍之洪基).<sup>100</sup> In this context, Nakao's interpretation seems unlikely.

Whatever the resolution to the apparent inconsistencies in statements made by or about Chōgen concerning his trips to China, his knowledge of Chinese Pure Land societies, distribution of reliquaries based on precedents he claims to have seen in southern China, familiarity with Chinese temple architecture and building practices, and relations with Chinese traders and workmen all provide ample evidence that Chōgen did indeed travel to China, even though questions remain about when and where.

### **The Hakata-based Chinese traders**

Chōgen's travels to China took place as interest in continental affairs expanded during the late 11th and 12th centuries, and was the first of many monks who sought to learn about Buddhism on the continent after relations between the two countries were reestablished in the late Heian. The most common Chinese port serving traffic across the East China Sea was Ningbo, and most of the ships were operated by Hakata-based Chinese traders, known as the *Hakata shōnin* 博多商人. A story which captures the flavor of trade during this period is told

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100. Kobayashi, p. 68.

by the Edo Period Confucian scholar, Itō Tōkai 伊藤東涯, in his *Record of the Tea-bowl Named “Locust Clamp”* (*Bakōhan saōki* 馬蝗絆茶甌記),<sup>101</sup> about a celadon porcelain bowl originally from the Longquan 龍泉 kilns in Zhejiang and given to Taira no Shigemori 平重盛 (1138-1179) around 1175 in return for a donation he made to Ayuwangshan in Ningbo. According to the story, the bowl cracked while being used by the Muromachi Shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimasa 足利義政 (r. 1449-1473), and was returned to China for repairs. However, as such high-quality porcelain was no longer in production in China by the mid-15th century, the bowl was promptly delivered back to the Shogun with the crack fastened with a clamp that was said to look like a locust – hence the name given to the bowl. This story is actually a retelling of an earlier tale called “Sending Funds” (*Kane watashi* 金渡) from the *Heike monogatari*, which describes Shigemori’s descendants contributing to his eventual salvation by sending three thousand *ryō* 兩 of cash to the Southern Song with a Chinese ship captain named “Marvelous Canon” (Miao Dian 妙典). In that tale, the captain donated one thousand *ryō* to the sangha at Ayuwangshan and two thousand to the Chinese emperor. The emperor, pleased with this act of fealty, donated five hundred *chō* 町 of fields to Ayuwangshan and held his own memorial service to pray for Shigemori. While these stories are almost certainly exaggerated accounts, their details – including the Taira clan, Longquan celadon, the Chinese trader, and Ayuwangshan – inspire an image of the main cast of characters, items, and places involved in Sino-Japanese trade in the late Heian.<sup>102</sup>

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101. Yoshizawa, p.248. Also see the item in the online catalog at e-Museums: National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties of National Museums, Japan, 13 May 2016, <<http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100886>>.

102. Yoshizawa, p. 248.

While “Miao Dian” may be a fictitious name, real Chinese maritime traders served as the engine for Sino-Japanese economic and religious exchange during the mid- and late Heian. The items they imported satisfied the insatiable desires of Japanese aristocrats for Chinese objects. Japanese temples also appreciated Chinese Buddhist artifacts, with sutras and other literature in special demand by monks and nobles. Japanese imports in the 10th and early 11th centuries were first processed by the Dazaifu kōrokan 太宰府鴻臚館,<sup>103</sup> which administered the Japanese court’s right to first purchase of any imported goods. During the mid 11th c., as the Taira began to assert their influence over Chinese trade, the Kōrokan was abolished and the trade center was transferred to Hakata 博多.<sup>104</sup> Eventually, Hakata proved too small to handle the increasing volume of traffic, and so Kiyomori, head of the Taira clan, directed some Chinese ships closer to the capital by developing a route through the Seto Inland Sea (*Seto naikai kōro* 瀬戸内海航路). As part of this endeavor, the Taira assumed administration of the provinces that bordered the new sea route between Hakata and Kyoto, including Dazaifu.<sup>105</sup>

Hakata was also known as the contemporary “Chinatown” (Hakata tsutōbō 博多津唐坊), where Chinese traders lived, ate, and worshipped, with similarities to the Chinatowns that emerged around the world following the Chinese exodus of the 19th and 20th centuries. Archeological excavations of Hakata have revealed tiles manufactured in the environs of Ningbo that decorated the traders homes in the style of their native country. Green and white

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103. For the early history of Dazaifu from the late 8th - 12th centuries, see Batten.

104. Nakao, p. 63.

105. Gomi, p. 90.

porcelain in great quantities has been discovered here, as well, pointing to the existence of storehouses used at the port city for recently imported inventory. The development of a trade model whereby foreign traders resided on Japanese soil was new during this period.<sup>106</sup>

Fragments of pottery with Chinese surnames such as “Zhang” 張, “Ding” 丁, and “Chen” 陳 written in ink appear among artifacts from the area. Most likely, ceramic plates and bowls destined from Japan were placed on trade ships in containers with the names of a specific trader written on the top item of each stack of shipments to prevent errors in delivery. Wares of the types discovered in Hakata have not been found near other ports in Japan, suggesting that Hakata was the sole destination for all trade of porcelain during this time. Another character found on some wares is “gang” 綱, which refers to the “gangshou” 綱首, or boat captain, such as Miao Dian from the *Heike monogatari* episode. One particularly well-known captain was Zhang Cheng 張成, who provided a copy of the complete Song canon to the monk Shikijō 色定 from Munekata Shrine 宗像社.<sup>107</sup>

The ships that made the voyages across the East China Sea were most likely a type of south Chinese junk of more than thirty meters in length. The Shin’an 新安 shipwreck discovered off the coast of southwest South Korea that left the port of Ningbo in 1323 was once such a ship. The Shin’an ship is known to have been en route to Japan based on wooden tags (*mokkan* 木簡) that labeled cargo intended to finance construction and repairs of

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106. Yoshizawa, p. 248.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 248-249.



various Japanese temples, including the Tōdaiji Great Buddha Hall. The ship was presumably blown off course by a storm, sinking before reaching its final destination.<sup>108</sup>

The Hakata Chinatown community was fervidly religious, unsurprisingly so given the divine protection they required for dangerous sea voyages. A record referencing their religiosity exists in the form of a stone stele inscription known only as “*Songren shike*” 宋人石刻, now stored at the Ningbo Museum (Ningbo bowuguan 寧波博物館). The inscription includes the names of two Chinese “Buddhist disciples” who resided in Hakata, Ding Yuan 丁淵 and Zhang Ning 張寧, who donated some of their trade profits to a temple in Ningbo. The Hakata Chinese also engaged in the sutra burial practice first connected in Japan with Michinaga. On a burial receptacle discovered at the Kannondō 觀音堂 in Satani 佐谷 in Fukuoka Prefecture is inscribed the name “*Songren Feng Rong*” 宋人馮榮 with the additional Chinese surnames “Chen” 陳 and “Xu” 徐 written on the cover and base. Also, examples of green celadon and brown-glazed Chinese-produced sutra burial receptacles have been discovered in the northern part of Kyūshū. Whether these were used personally by Chinese merchants or the products of requests for bespoke receptacles at Chinese kilns on behalf of Japanese customers is unclear. Either way, Chinese pottery was used for practitioners of “good works” in Japan, as discussed above.<sup>109</sup>

The items that Japanese buyers sought most from China were porcelains, but the Japanese also imported sizable amounts of bronze cash, as evidenced in the cargo of sunken ships from the period. The technology to fire porcelain, which requires extremely high kiln

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108. Iwato, p. 269-271.

109. Yoshizawa, p. 249.

temperatures between 1200-1400 °C was not understood until Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (1536 or 1537-1598) invasion of Korea in 1592, when Japanese soldiers kidnapped Korean potters and brought them to Japan. Likewise, Chinese bronze currency was used as a standardized currency in Japan from the 11th through the 17th centuries since Japan had abandoned its own coinage at the end of the 10th c. Japan's copper mines were relatively meager, making bronze all the more valuable. Much of the bronze alloy used by Chōgen for casting the Great Buddha is thought to have originated from several tens of tons of Chinese bronze cash melted for this purpose.<sup>110</sup> So much Chinese-minted cash was leaving for Japan that the Song court at times forbade its export.<sup>111</sup> As payment for items imported from China, Japanese traded silks in the 10th century, and later gold. According to the *Aokata monjo* 青方文書, boats departing Japan were also said to carry armor, lacquer boxes, and mercury.<sup>112</sup>

Chōgen almost certainly sailed on Chinese trade ships dealing in porcelains and bronze cash, departing from Hakata and landing in Ningbo. As already discussed, his first trip was probably arranged through an intermediary in the Taira clan, which owned many of the goods imported to Japan in the mid-12th century. While Japanese monks like Chōgen traveled to China with lofty ambitions – to improve their knowledge of Buddhist doctrine and practice, or to locate Buddhist sutras, paintings, or sculpture – their trips were made possible by the merchant activity of Chinese traders with more secular aims.

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110. Yoshizawa, p. 249.

111. Nakao, p. 62.

112. Yoshizawa, p. 249.

Chōgen would develop strong ties with the Hakata region owing to his voyages to China from the port city. According to the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen later copied the *Lotus Sutra* and *Mahāvairocana Sutra* at the Hakozaki Shrine 筥崎宮 in Chinzei 鎮西, and donated a sixteen-foot Buddha statue to Seiganji 誓願寺 in Imazu 今津, both near Hakata. These temples may have been connected with Hakata merchants or tradesman that assisted Chōgen during his trips to China and perhaps later with the reconstruction of Tōdaiji. Generally speaking, Chōgen’s trips from Hakata to Ningbo yielded a wealth of Buddhist statues, sutras, and Buddhist paintings that he donated to temples and shrines upon his return. Among these were a “Chinese Buddha” (*tōbutsu* 唐仏) – an Amitābha triptych for the Kōya shinbessho 高野新別所 – and a “Chinese text” (*tōhon* 唐本) – a complete copy of a Song-printed Buddhist canon for Daigoji. Records from Daigoji temple claim that Chōgen returned from China with more than 7,000 sutra scrolls.<sup>113</sup>

### **Obtaining the complete Song canon**

One of the motivations for Chōgen’s trip was the acquisition of a complete version of the Chinese canon. In the 10th century, Chōnen returned from China with a complete canon, and since his itinerary inspired Chōgen’s own trip, Chōgen probably desired to emulate his example. The origin of the canon Chōgen installed at Daigoji is unclear. He may have obtained it in China himself, or it may have been purchased directly from traders in Hakata.

The importation of Buddhist texts from China continued unabated from the time of the initial transmission of Buddhism to Japan. Monks from every period traveled to the

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113. Nakao, p. 67.

continent in search of undiscovered Buddhist sutras, commentaries, biographies, and histories for copy or purchase, time-consuming and expensive endeavors, respectively. Chinese woodblock printing technology, developed as early as the 7th century, reset the market, enabling texts to be produced more quickly, efficiently, and cheaply. Thus, during the Song, Japanese monks visiting China prioritized the acquisition of a complete Buddhist canon, still a relative rarity in Japan even though portions of the canon had been printed in China from the 9th century. Printed texts were attractive not only because they could be produced quickly with less effort than hand-copying, but also because they were free of copyist errors that resulted in mistaken or omitted characters.<sup>114</sup>

While the term “complete canon” (*C. yiqiejing*, *J. issaikyō* 一切經) was used in Japan, it was not a common term in China. As in Japan, the term was occasionally used to refer to the collected set of Buddhist texts in Chinese translation, but in later periods in China the term “Great Store of Scriptures” (*Dazangjing* 大藏經) became the standard. In Japan, the “complete canon” referred to any printed edition of the Chinese *tripiṭaka*, though each printed edition of the Chinese canon in fact had a unique name. The Chinese names for the early printings emphasized the era in which they were printed (or at least the era when their printing was ordered), while the Japanese used another set of names that emphasized the location where each canon was printed. The Song editions of the canon included the 983 *Kaibaozang* 開寶藏 (*J. Shokuhan issaikyō* 蜀版一切經); the 1112 *Chongningzang* 崇寧藏 (*J. Tōzenjihan* 東禪寺版); the 1126 *Sixizang* 思溪藏 or *Yuanjueyang* 圓覺藏 (*J. Shikeihan* 思溪版); the 1151 *Piluzang* 毗盧藏 (*J. Kaigenjihan* 開元寺版); and the 1322 *Qishazang* 磧沙

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114. Saiki, p. 241.

藏 (*J. Sekishahan* 磧沙版). The *Qishazang* edition was actually begun in 1229, but due to political chaos during the transition between dynasties, was not completed until almost one hundred years later in the Yuan.<sup>115</sup>

The Song editions of the printed canon had an enormous and immediate impact on neighboring countries. Only about thirty years after the printing of the *Kaibaozang*, a Korean edition (*K. Goryeo gyojang* 高麗教藏) of the canon was begun in 1011 based on the Song edition. A Liao edition of the canon, (*C. Qidanzang* 契丹藏) was also produced in the 11th century based on the *Kaibaozang*, whose wood blocks were reproduced by Liao carvers from 1149-1173.<sup>116</sup>

The first copy of a Song edition of the complete canon brought to Japan was the *Kaibaozang* bestowed by the Chinese emperor on Chōnen. The printing of this particular edition of the canon had a strong political motivation, as the wood blocks were carved in Chengdu 成都, the capital of the Later Shu 後蜀 Dynasty, which was incorporated into the Song in 965. Producing the wood blocks in Chengdu was intended as a form of good works bestowed on the region by the emperor to demonstrate his concern for his empire's periphery (and probably reducing the chances of rebellion). The completed wood blocks were then moved to the capital for printing. Copies of the completed canon were not only conferred upon Japan via Chōnen, but also bestowed upon Goryeo, Xixia 西夏, and northern provinces of Vietnam (*C. Jiaozhi* 交趾), all of which had pledged loyalty to the Song.<sup>117</sup> Thus, in a

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115. Saiki, p. 241.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

117. *Ibid.*

fashion repeatedly seen in Sino-Japanese historical relations, Chōnen's return from China with a complete Song canon and other precious items was a cause for celebration from the Japanese perspective, while simultaneously understood as an act of submission from the viewpoint of the Chinese sovereign.

Chōnen's complete canon was curated by his disciples following his death, but in 1018, the canon was presented to Minister of the Left Michinaga, who kept it at the Oshikōji karasumadono 押小路烏丸殿 and later at another residence, the Jōtōmondai 上東門第. In 1021 as part of the commemoration ceremony for Hōjōji 法成寺 built by Michinaga, the texts were transferred there while accompanied by an ensemble performing Goryeo music. Copies of the complete canon were highly sought after by Michinaga, who also gave cash to Jakushō 寂照 (964-1034) to obtain a set during his trip to China in 1015. As the concept of the joint flourishing of political power and the Buddhist religion became integral to the world view of powerful Japanese aristocrats, the ownership of a complete canon became a powerful symbol of legitimate rule, in this case by Michinaga and the Fujiwara. Even Shirakawa was compelled to use Michinaga's copy of the canon on several occasions since it was the only one of its type in Japan at the time.<sup>118</sup>

While the first printed copies of the complete canon were made in the first half of the 11th century in China, the canon was not widely distributed in Japan for some time; copies of the complete canon were not imported with regularity until the latter half of the 12th century. The complete canons imported to Japan during this period were of many types. A copy obtained by Chūsonji 中尊寺 in Hiraizumi 平泉 is thought to have been originally printed in

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118. *Ibid.*

Ningbo, where it was the possession of the Jixiangyuan 吉祥院. Rather than a single printing, this copy was composed of texts from multiple printings, including the *Chongningzang*, the *Piluzang*, and the *Sixizang*, pieced together in order to supplement missing texts from several sets.

By Chōgen's time, obtaining a copy of the complete canon was universally understood as the transfer of knowledge and spiritual power from the continent, and earned distinction for those who acquired one. Returning with a copy of the complete canon was probably one of the major motivations for Chōgen's voyages, and the copy he gave to Daigoji no doubt cemented his legacy as one of the preeminent monks of his day.<sup>119</sup>

### The Records of Chōgen's trip to South China

One of Chōgen's visits to China is recorded in 1167 in both the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 (1322) and the *Jōdoji kaisoden* 浄土寺開祖伝.<sup>120</sup> While the dates of the other two voyages are unclear, the previously mentioned inscription from 1176 on the Kōyasan bell introduces Chōgen as the monk who traveled to China three times, providing a *terminus ante quem* for his complete travels. Also, since Chōgen assisted with the rebuilding of the Kayanomori Hall 栢杜堂 at Daigoji in 1155 and the architectural design of the building was based on Song precedents, he probably returned from his first trip to China by the previous

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119. Where Chōgen actually found the copy he gave to Daigoji is unclear, but according to the *Hiesan nōrishōki* 日吉山王利生記 it may have been obtained through a Chinese translator based in Hakata by the name of Li Yu 李宇. Other copies were also imported by Song traders during this period, including a copy made by the monk Ryōsuke 良祐 based on a Tang original owned by the ship captain, Zhang Cheng (Saiki, p. 243).

120. Reprinted in Kobayashi, p. 17.

year. Combining this information, one may hypothesize that Chōgen made all three trips during the roughly twenty-five years between the early 1150's and 1176, with one trip in 1167. The most detailed record of Chōgen's trips appears in the *Gyokuyō*, Kanezane's diary. There, Kanezane mentions Chōgen's original intentions to travel northward to Wutaishan, only to be frustrated by the news of road closures that prevented entrance to Jurchen territory, including Mañjuśrī's mountain peaks. Chōgen at first thought to return home, his efforts in vain, but took heart from the advice of locals, who encouraged him instead to visit Tiantaishan, the mountain home of the Tiantai School (Tiantaizong 天台宗), and Ayuwangshan, renowned for its true relic of the Buddha's body.<sup>121</sup>

Without accounting for the political instabilities that plagued north China at the time, Wutaishan was a natural destination for Chōgen when he planned his trip. Along with Samantabhadra's Emeishan 峨眉山 in Sichuan and Avalokiteśvara's Putuoshan 普陀山 off the coast of Ningbo, Wutaishan formed a trinity of holy Buddhist mountains in China. Wutaishan's association with Amoghavajra, prolific translator of esoteric texts during the Tang and teacher of Huiguo 惠果, Kūkai's master, lent the mountain a certain reputation among Shingon monks in Japan. In addition to Chōnen, Miidera's 三井寺 Jōjin 成尋 (1011-1081) had made a pilgrimage there, bequeathing an itinerary for future Japanese monks planning

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121. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 593-594. Also see Gomi, p. 82-83.



continental voyages, even though he had not been given official permission for his trip by the Heian court.<sup>122</sup>

### *Tiantaishan's Five Hundred Arhats*

Alas, Chōgen's trip to north China proved unfeasible, and so making the best of his misfortune, he restructured his itinerary, substituting Tiantaishan and Ayuwangshan for Wutaishan.<sup>123</sup> While Tiantaishan is of course closely associated with Tiantai practice, by the Southern Song, Hangzhou and Ningbo were more significant as urban centers of the Tiantai geographical network. Nevertheless, Japanese travelers were inspired by Chinese travel literature that extolled the beauty of Tiantaishan. For example, Sun Chuo's 孫綽 (320-377) prose-poem "Journey to Tiantaishan" (*You tiantaishan fu* 遊天台山賦),<sup>124</sup> begins: "Tiantaishan is probably the most divinely beautiful of the mountain peaks. Crossing the sea one could reach the divine mountains of Fangzhang 方丈 and Penglai 蓬萊,<sup>125</sup> arriving on

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122. Gomi, p. 84. Jōjin's record of his voyages was transmitted back to Japan in 1073 by his disciples after he had spent just a year in China, a relatively small fraction of the total time he would remain. Nothing substantial is known of his travels after this year, and he was said to pass away in 1082 in Kaifeng. Unlike Chōgen, the majority of the knowledge Jōjin amassed about Song Buddhism was thus never communicated to his home country. For more details about the life of Jōjin, see Borgen.

123. The biography of Chōgen from the 1702 *Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Eastern Country* (*Dongguo gaoseng zhuan* 東國高僧傳), Vol. 9, records Chōgen's trips to Tiantaishan and Ayuwangshan, but repeats the information contained in Kanezane's diary.

124. This poem is an imagined, and thus fictitious, journey by Sun Chuo, but the vividness of his descriptions still inspired future Japanese travelers.

125. Fabled divine abodes of the immortals in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing* 山海經) and other texts of Chinese mythology.

land there are the mountains of Siming 四明 and Tiantai” (天台山者，蓋山嶽之神秀者也。涉海則有方丈蓬萊，登陸則有四明天台).<sup>126</sup> Such literature stirred the imaginations of Japanese Buddhist sightseers, putting Tiantaishan on the map of must-see continental destinations.<sup>127</sup>

The Tiantai mountain range is composed of several peaks that surround the tallest, Huadingshan 華頂山, at 1110 meters. The rugged, forest landscape was long renowned for the changing colors of the four seasons. According to Daoist lore, the mountain was home to gods and immortals. In the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420), Buddhism spread to Tiantaishan, which became associated with the Tiantai School in the 6th century when Huisi’s 慧思 (515–577) disciple, Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597),<sup>128</sup> retired there for intensive study and practice with a small number of students. Before passing away in 597, Zhiyi founded many temples at the site, starting with Guoqingsi 國清寺. This temple now covers a vast area and features six hundred rooms in fourteen halls.

Tiantaishan, like Wutaishan, was a frequent destination of pilgrimages by Japanese monks. Saichō (767-822) developed an interest in Tiantai Buddhism after reading texts brought to Japan by the monk, Jianzhen 鑑真 (*J. Ganjin*, 688-763), and traveled to China

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126. “遊天台山賦,” *FXDCD*.

127. Gomi, p. 85. For more on Sun Chuo and “Journey to Tiantaishan,” see (1) Kirkova, Zornica, “Distant Roaming and Visionary Ascent: Sun Chuo’s ‘You Tiantai shan fu’ Reconsidered,” *Oriens Extremus*, Vol. 47 (2008), p. 192-214; and (2) Shulman, David and Guy S. Stroumsa, ed., *Self and Self-Transformations in the History of Religions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 44-45.

128. Zhiyi is considered to be the fourth patriarch of Tiantai and his master, Huisi, the second. However, Zhiyi was the *de facto* founder of the tradition.

specifically for study at the mountain.<sup>129</sup> His Tiantaishan education provided the basis for the establishment of the Tendai School on Hieizan after his return to Japan. Later, the Hieizan monks Enchin 円珍 (814-891) and Jōjin visited Tiantaishan, as well.<sup>130</sup>

Apart from Guoqingsi, Zhiyi was associated with many holy sites on the mountain. Among them is the Rock Bridge Crossing the Waterfall (*shiliang pubu* 石梁瀑布), considered the highlight of the Tiantaishan pilgrimage. The Rock Bridge, as its name implies, is a narrow natural rock formation that crosses a cascade. There, it was believed that the five hundred arhats (*wubai daluohan* 五百大羅漢), the immediate disciples of the Buddha, resided in a heavenly temple and would manifest themselves to the virtuous.<sup>131</sup> In Jōjin's travel diary, the *Record of a Pilgrimage to Tiantaishan and Wutaishan* (*San tendai godaisan ki* 參天台五台山記),<sup>132</sup> he describes the bridge's size, shape and color in vivid detail. His anticipation of the moment he would first set eyes on the bridge was so great that upon arriving, he wept tears of joy. On the next day, Jōjin returned to the bridge, where he experienced a revelation of the arhats offering him tea. In later times, witnessing the manifestation of the arhats and joining them for tea became the primary objective of visits to Tiantaishan for Japanese monks.<sup>133</sup>

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129. See Paul Groner, *Saichō: the Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School*, Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1984.

130. Taniguchi (2009), p. 11.

131. Such legends were probably influenced by Daoist tales that described Wutaishan as the abode of the immortals.

132. In *Dai nihon bukkyō zensho*, Vol. 115, p. 321.

133. Taniguchi (2009), p. 11.

By Chōgen's time, the five hundred arhats of Tiantaishan were so celebrated that they became the subject of a Chinese set of one hundred hanging scrolls later transported to Daitokuji 大徳寺 in Kyoto. The scrolls were painted from 1178 to 1182 and originally installed at Huiansi 惠安寺 on Lake Dongqian 東錢湖 to the southeast of Ningbo.<sup>134</sup> Each painting is based on a Buddhist legend or historical event, creating visual topics that animate the arhats for the viewer. One of the scrolls, now owned by the Freer Sackler Gallery, portrays the attempt made to cross the Rock Bridge by the 4th century monk, Tanyou 曇猷, who began his effort only to find that the narrow end of the bridge was obstructed by an untraversable stone slab. After praying and fasting for several days, the arhats recognized Tanyou's virtue, and opened a gateway in the stone, permitting him to briefly ascend to their heavenly monastery.<sup>135</sup> Another five hundred arhat painting from the 13th c. held privately<sup>136</sup> depicts the arhats enjoying tea in front of the Wutaishan temple constructed specifically for worship of the arhats, Fangguangsi 方廣寺.<sup>137</sup>

According to the *Gyokuyō*, Chōgen described his own experience at the famous Rock Bridge to Kanezane after returning to Japan. In that conversation, Chōgen said that the only monks able to cross the bridge were those who had never broken the precepts, and thus only one or two out of every ten people who tried were successful. However, Chōgen goes on to

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134. See *Seichi Ninpō*, n. 104.

135. See online catalog entry at the Freer-Sackler Galleries of Art, <<http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/singleObject.cfm?ObjectNumber=F1907.139>>.

136. See *Seichi Ninpō*, n. 108.

137. Taniguchi (2009), p. 11.

say that a higher percentage of Japanese monks successfully made the crossing, a statement that may reflect courtesies he received from his Chinese hosts during his stay.<sup>138</sup> In any case, Chōgen affirmed that he was able to cross the bridge like his Japanese predecessors.

### *Ayuwangshan's Relic Worship*

In addition to visiting Tiantaishan, Chōgen apparently made multiple trips to one of the most renowned sites of Chinese Buddhist relic worship, Ayuwangshan.<sup>139</sup> While relic worship had a long history in Japan prior to Chōgen's time that included Kūkai's relics at Tōji 東寺, Ganjin's relics at Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺, and the legends of Shōtoku taishi 聖德太子 (572-622),<sup>140</sup> Chōgen's personal inspiration for relic worship derived from his experiences at Ayuwangshan.

This Ayuwangshan mountain temple complex, located in Ningbo 寧波, is named for King Aśoka (C. *Ayuwang* 阿育王, 304-232 BCE), the first ruler to unite India under a single banner after a series of bloody campaigns against other monarchs. Aśoka patronized Buddhism and used it to consolidate his power by proclaiming himself to be a *cakravartin* (C. *zhuanlun shengwang*, J. *tenrin jō'ō* 轉輪聖王),<sup>141</sup> the Buddhist ideal of a wise,

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138. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 593-594.

139. *Ibid.*

140. Prince Shōtoku is alleged to be the “founder” of Japanese Buddhism, having written the first Japanese commentaries on Buddhist texts and constructed Shitennōji 四天王寺, Japan's first Buddhist temple.

141. Specifically, Aśoka was cast as an Iron Wheel-Turning Monarch (C. *tielunwang* 鐵輪王), the ruler of the Southern continent of Jambudvīpa, the “known world.”

benevolent, and just king. According to the *Chronicles of Aśoka* (*C. Ayuwangzhuan* 阿育王傳), translated into Chinese in 306 during the Western Jin 西晉 Dynasty, Aśoka opened seven of the eight original stupas containing Śākyamuni's relics, divided them into smaller fragments, and reburied them in 84,000 stupas across India as a symbol of his power and good will so that all of his people could benefit from the Buddha's corporeal remnants.<sup>142</sup> The origin of relic worship in China can be traced to the third century, which is around the time the Aśoka legend was propagated.

From the third century, the remains of Ayuwangshan towers<sup>143</sup> were said to have been discovered across China, since the Chinese believed that Aśoka had distributed the Buddha's relics across the known world as the universal monarch of the Jambudvīpa continent. The third fascicle of the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林<sup>144</sup> reports that twenty-one Ayuwang towers had been discovered in China, conforming to places where Śākyamuni had wandered as a beggar in one of his previous lives. These places include the Huijishan Maoxian Tower 會稽山鄞縣塔 (i.e. Ayuwangsi), the Jinling Changganta 金陵長干塔 (in Nanjing), and the Qishan Nangu Tower 岐山南古塔 in Fufeng County 扶風縣 (the site of Famensi 法門寺).<sup>145</sup>

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142. The term “84,000” derived from the minuscule parts composing the Buddha's body as well as the divisions of the Buddha's teaching. It became a synonym for “infinity,” and in many cases was not intended as an actual number. However, in China and Japan the term was at times taken literally.

143. “Tower” is used as a general term here to refer to structures built to mark a site for the burial of Buddhist relics, as well as the miniature portable towers created to transport relics. In India, the stupa was used to protect the Buddha's remains, while in East Asia the stupa evolved into the pagoda built using Chinese architectural principles.

144. The seventh century Buddhist encyclopedia compiled by Daoshi 道世 (?–683).

The pseudo-historical account of the origin of the Ayuwangsi<sup>146</sup> temple complex was recorded by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) in his *Jishenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄,<sup>147</sup> in which he tells of a hunter named Liu Sahe 劉薩何 who lived during the Western Jin. In order to escape the punishments of hell in recompense for the sins he committed against other sentient beings, Liu sought the remains of old stupas built by King Aśoka. After locating one such site, he performed repentance rites to atone for his crimes and eventually took the tonsure, taking the name “Huida” 慧達. At the stupa ruins, one day he heard the sound of a bell, and suddenly a treasure tower<sup>148</sup> with a relic emerged from the ground. The treasure tower was blue, about forty-five cm. high, with windows on four sides. On the exterior were images of many Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Vajra-wielding Guardians, and monks. Inside the tower was a copper chime stone (*qing* 磬). Owing to this account, Emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502-549) constructed a new, wooden pagoda on the same site in 522 in order to house both the jeweled tower and the relic associated with Huida. The monastery constructed next to the pagoda became Ayuwangsi.<sup>149</sup>

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145. T53, n. 2122, p. 586a21 and 590b22. Famensi is famous for its finger bone relic, the object of Han Yu’s 韓愈 (768-824) ire.

146. Ayuwangsi is the name of the temple built on Ayuwangshan mountain, though for most purposes the two terms are used interchangeably.

147. T52, n. 2106.

148. The treasure tower of Prabhūtaratna (Duobao 多寶) emerges from the ground in Chapter Eleven of the *Lotus Sutra*, although in that case the tower functions to extol the merits of the *Lotus Sutra* itself, which appropriates the function of Buddhist relics according to the text.

149. T52, n. 2106, p. 404b12. Also see Taniguchi (2009), p. 8; Naitō (2004), p. 245.

The *Guanghong mingji* 廣弘明集 records another account of the discovery of Ayuwang relics at the Changganta. According to that account, the same monk who discovered the pagoda ruins at Ayuwangshan, Huida 慧達, one day saw light emanating from the ground at a different site. Digging one *zhang* 丈 into the earth, he discovered three stone boxes. Inside those were three gold boxes, which in turn held three relics along with hair and (finger)nails. The hair was about three feet (*chi* 尺) long, and wound in a spiral,<sup>150</sup> so presumably the hair was not from a tonsured monk.

Such stories of the discovery of Ayuwang relics across China as recorded in the *Guanghong mingji* and *Fayuan zhulin* functioned to create a continuity between China and India both spatially and temporally. For early Chinese Buddhist chroniclers, the discovered ruins of King Aśoka's towers were proof that China was one of the original recipients of Aśoka's relic dispensation, and thus a "holy land" with connections to the material existence of the historical Buddha. Such legends occupied a place in debates about center and periphery from the perspective of Buddhist geography, debates that captured the imaginations of Chinese thinkers and later Japanese thinkers, as well.<sup>151</sup>

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150. T52, n. 2103, p. 201c27. See Naitō (2009), p. 245. This description matches hair inserted into an Amitābha statue dated circa 1194 from Kengōin 遣迎院 in Kyōto, which was similar in length and manner of bundling. In the case of the Kengōin statue, the hair was probably from a patron who helped to finance the statue and served to establish a karmic connection between the patron and Amitābha.

151. Accounts of the discovery of Aśoka relics implied that Aśoka had at one time ruled China, as well, since Aśoka's relics were distributed across all of the Jambudvīpa continent according to the Aśoka legend. How this fact tallied with existing Chinese chronologies of their rulers is uncertain, but many dates were asserted for the birth and death of the Buddha in China, some much older than the 5th or 6th century BCE that he is believed to have lived now. Different dates for Aśoka's reign could thus be asserted, too. Multiple, competing chronologies provided flexibility for historians to solve inconsistencies between the dates for Aśoka's alleged rule and the reign dates for Chinese emperors recorded in other sources.



Ayuwangshan and its origin stories inspired the benevolent actions of many Chinese emperors in later ages. For example, Emperor Wenchengdi 文成帝 (r. 451-465) of the Northern Wei 北魏 constructed a pagoda in each province of his land.<sup>152</sup> Emperor Wendi 文帝 of the Sui 隋 also built pagodas he called “Relic Towers of Virtue and Long-life” (*Renshou shelita* 仁壽舍利塔) in each prefecture of his empire from 601 to 604. These pagodas served as arenas for Buddhist rituals on auspicious occasions such as the emperor’s birthday. Other rituals conducted at Wendi’s pagodas apparently derived from Indian ceremonial antecedents. For example, in 606, the relics were removed from each of Wendi’s fifty-three pagodas, and then at exactly noon on the eighth day of the fourth month simultaneously reinstalled. This ceremony may have emulated an account discussed in Xuanzang’s 玄奘 *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (*Datang xiyuji* 大唐西域記), in which Aśoka buried his relics in all 84,000 pagodas simultaneously in order to avert the pernicious effects of a solar eclipse.<sup>153</sup>

The Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705) of the Tang also placed her faith in pagoda construction, albeit on a miniature scale. In 694, near the beginning of her reign, she built Great Cloud Temples (Dayunsi 大雲寺) in every prefecture, installing copies of a forged text, the *Great Cloud Sutra* (*Dayunjing* 大雲經), in each temple. That text miraculously predicted the coming of Wu Zetian’s reign, no doubt aided by the fact that its composers were writing after she came to power. In 1960, a reliquary enclosure was discovered at one of the Great Cloud Temple sites in Gansu Province. Inside the recesses at the bases of two towers were

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152. *FZTJ*, p. 463c21; Naitō (2009), p. 245.

153. T51, n. 2087, p. 911c06. The story of Aśoka begins at p. 911a20.

fourteen relic grains with an inscription saying that the relics were installed in imitation of King Aśoka's original benevolent deed. The above examples show that from the fifth century onwards, Buddhist relic pagodas were constructed across China as a symbol of the beneficence of rulers toward their people, in accordance with the model of King Aśoka, who had originally distributed relics across his land in order to bring the Buddha's salvific powers closer to his people.<sup>154</sup>

The monastery on Ayuwangshan that housed the famous relic became an important site for veneration by China's leaders. As mentioned, Emperor Wudi of the Liang built the first wooden pagoda and temple on the Ayuwangshan site in order to house the relic in 522. Emperor Jianwendi 簡文帝 (r. 549-555) later had the relics removed from the pagoda for his personal worship,<sup>155</sup> establishing a precedent for the removal of the Famensi finger bone relic, which was transported to the capital for imperial worship during the Tang and Northern Song.<sup>156</sup> Emperor Xuandi 宣帝 (r. 569-582) of the Chen 陳 praised the pagoda, and approved the ordination of fourteen monks there. Tang emperors were especially effulgent in their eulogies; Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 705-709), Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756-761), and Yizong 懿宗 (r. 860-871) all sent emissaries to participate in memorial services for the relic on the mountain.<sup>157</sup> During the time of Emperor Wuzong's 武宗 suppression of Buddhism, the relic

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154. Naitō (2009), p. 246.

155. *Ibid.*

156. The fingerbone relic of Famensi has made rounds to Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea in the past twenty years, showing that mobile veneration of the relic is still very much in vogue.

157. *FZTJ*, p. 461a22-24, p461a25-28, and 461b29-c1. See Naitō (2009), p. 246.

was stored in Ningbo government warehouses for protection, proving that devotion to the Buddha sometimes exceeded allegiance to fickle Chinese emperors.<sup>158</sup>

The most active period of Ayuwangshan worship was from the the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (五代十國, 907-979) through the Yuan 元 (1271-1368). King Qian Liu 錢鏐 (r. 907-932) of the Wuyue 吳越 sent his own brother as an official emissary to worship at Ayuwangshan. Few could surpass the fanaticism of King Qian Hongchu 錢弘俶 (r. 948-978) a few years later, who commissioned 84,000 small reliquaries composed of gold, copper, and silver to be fashioned and distributed across his kingdom, emulating the original act of Ashoka as a *cakravartin* monarch. Supposedly five hundred of these pagodas were even sent to Japan.<sup>159</sup> Many of the towers have been found in recesses (*digong* 地宮) under pagodas across Zhejiang 浙江 Province. They differ in size and composition, but many are approximately forty cm. high, just as in the legendary account of Huida. Inside are smaller, gold towers. They feature windows on four sides in which Śākyamuni sermonizes.<sup>160</sup>

Many of Qian Hongchu's extant pagodas contain a copy of the *Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī*.<sup>161</sup> The sutra in which the *dhāraṇī* is explained, the *Dhāraṇī Sutra on the Treasure Chest Seal of the of the Whole Body Relics Concealed in the Minds of All the Tathāgatas*, claims that should this *dhāraṇī* be inserted into a pagoda, the pagoda will become the vajra

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158. Naitō (2009), p. 246.

159. *Ibid.*

160. Taniguchi, p. 9.

161. Presumably this is the version of the *Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī Sutra* catalogued as T19, n. 1022A.

store of all the Buddhas – containing wisdom so potent that it possesses the immutable quality of a diamond. Additionally, the sutra says: “If a sentient being is able to plant virtuous roots at [the site of] this pagoda, he will certainly attain the stage of non-retrogression of supreme perfect enlightenment. Even for a person who should fall into the Avīci Hell, if he should make a single obeisance to the pagoda or circumambulate it one time, he will certainly be freed (若有有情能於此塔種殖善根。必定於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提得不退轉。乃至應墮阿鼻地獄若於此塔一禮拜一圍遶必得解脫).<sup>162</sup> Qian Hongchu, while often remembered as a wise and just ruler, in fact deposed the former Wuyue King and his half-brother, Qian Hongzong 錢弘倬, in a *coup d’état* before ascending to the throne. Thus, Qian Hongchu’s hands were stained with blood, much like King Aśoka’s before him, and he had good reason to follow King Aśoka’s example by constructing 84,000 pagodas. The *Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī Sutra*’s promise that even those destined for the worst realm of hell could escape their fate by using the *dhāraṇī* must also have been appealing. A second translation of the same sutra<sup>163</sup> has notable differences with the first. For instance, the second version claims that a person who repairs a pagoda will be reborn as a *cakravartin* king in the next life. This version of the *Treasure Chest Seal Sutra* would have had obvious attractions for Qian Hongchu, too – elevating him to the status of King Aśoka – though based on the chronology of the catalog history of the two versions of the sutra, it seems likely that Qian Hongchu used the first version.

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162. T19, n. 1022A, p. 711a28-b1.

163. T19, n. 1022B.

The temple next to the Ayuwangshan pagoda burned to the ground in 958, but was immediately rebuilt. Soon after, in 978 Qian Hongchu abdicated his throne and submitted to the Song Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976-997) in order to avoid certain destruction at the hands of his powerful northern neighbor. As part of his pledge of fealty to the Song, the former king brought the Ayuwangshan relic to the Song capital of Bianjing, where it was viewed by the emperor himself at the Zifudian 滋福殿. In this exchange, Qian Hongchu relinquished possession of his kingdom's greatest treasure as a symbol of the transfer of power. The Aśoka relic, which had been used by so many rulers to prove their benevolence, played yet another part in the establishment of a lasting peace.<sup>164</sup>

Taizong followed King Qian Hongchu's fascination with Ayuwangshan relic worship. According to the *Fozu tongji*, in 989 Taizong sponsored the construction of a pagoda to house an Ayuwangshan reliquary tower, and personally attended the pagoda's dedication:

A precious pagoda was constructed at Kaibaosi 開寶寺. It was octagonal, had eleven stories, and was thirty-six *zhang* 丈 in height. The emperor installed one thousand Buddha [statues] and ten thousand bodhisattva [statues]. Underneath the tower was built a recess for relics (lit. "heavenly palace," *tiangong* 天宮), for which an Ayuwangshan reliquary tower was offered. All of Hangzhou's pagodas were built by Yu Hao 喻浩 (?-989)<sup>165</sup> and usually took eight years to finish. The imperially designated name [for the temple associated with this pagoda] was Fushengtayuan 福勝塔院. On the day the reliquary was installed, the emperor came up the narrow path by sedan chair (*jianyu* 肩輿) holding [the reliquary tower] and presented it for burial [under the pagoda]. White light shone from the corner of the small [Ayuwangshan] tower. The large pagoda [also] emitted light, thoroughly illuminating heaven and earth. The scholars and common people burned incense, and those who contributed filled the streets. The eunuchs and palace attendants, some tens of people, sought to take the tonsure and serve at the pagoda. The emperor told

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164. Taniguchi, p. 10.

165. A Wuyue and Northern Song architect.

his close officials: “In my prior life, I was once close to the Buddha’s dais.<sup>166</sup> However, [until now] I had not remembered this previous existence.”

開寶寺建寶塔成。八隅十一層。三十六丈。上安千佛萬菩薩。塔下作天宮奉安阿育王佛舍利塔。皆杭州塔工喻浩所造。凡八年而畢。賜名福勝塔院。安舍利日。上肩輿微行。自手奉藏。有白光起小塔一角。大塔放光洞照天地。士庶焚香獻供者盈路。內侍數十人求出家掃塔。上謂近臣曰。我宿世曾親佛座。但未通宿命耳。<sup>167</sup>

The earliest record concerning Ayuwang towers in Japan is from 631, when a Japanese emissary to the Tang (*kentōshi* 遣唐使) was asked by a Chinese monk if Ayuwang towers had been found in Japan. The Japanese emissary reported that many such towers had been found. Such questions were not idle inquisitiveness. As the legend of Aśoka’s distribution of the Buddha’s relics had by this time become a matter of historical record in China, this Chinese monk was really asking whether Japan was a recipient of King Aśoka’s original promulgation of Buddhism, since the discovery of Aśoka towers was equivalent to asserting one’s country’s association with the early days of Buddhist history, and a way of ranking countries’ geographic and temporal proximity to the center. According to the *Nihon kiryaku* 日本紀略, Ayuwang towers were “in fact” discovered in Harima 播磨 in 821 and Sanga 参賀 in 860.<sup>168</sup>

The first monk to visit both Ayuwangshan and Japan was Tōdaiji’s Jianzhen, who returned to the Ningbo area following his second failed crossing to Japan. He visited the

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166. In other words, one of the audience members closest to the Buddha when he preached the sermons recorded in the sutras; someone intimate with the Buddha.

167. T49, n. 2035, 400b4-b11.

168. *Nihon kiryaku* 日本紀略, p. 577. See Naitō (2009), p. 246. Also see Oishio.

temple and pagoda while awaiting another ship for the voyage.<sup>169</sup> Jianzhen describes the Ayuwang towers he saw as the color of the Monkshood vine (*ziwu* 紫烏) and made from various materials, including gold, jewels, stone, clay, copper, and iron. He brought a gilded bronze Ayuwang tower to Japan when he finally made his successful crossing on the sixth attempt.<sup>170</sup>

Just as in China, Japanese monarchs embraced the intention to follow in the footsteps of King Aśoka and King Qian Hongchu by creating 84,000 pagodas in order to demonstrate their benevolent rule. Empress Kōken 称徳天皇 (r. 749-758 and 764-770) vowed to fulfill this aim during the Fujiwara no Nakamaro Rebellion (*Fujiwara no nakamaro no ran* 藤原仲麻呂の乱), and in 770 is said to have completed one million wooden, three-story towers containing the *Mukujōkōkyō dhāraṇī* 無垢浄光経陀羅尼 engraved on wood. Though the rebellion ended before the project could be completed, the construction of the pagodas continued in order to provide solace for the dead<sup>171</sup> and restore peace to the country. Kōken's example of pagoda construction is thus one more link on a long chain of precedents for constructing towers sponsored by rulers following the outbreak of war or rebellion. As

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169. As recorded in Jianzhen's biography, *Tōdaiwajō tōseiden* 唐大和上東征傳, *Dai nihon bukkō zensho*, Vol. 113, p. 130-148.

170. Naitō (2009), p. 246.

171. During the rebellion, Nakamaro seized the symbols of imperial authority, but his forces were blocked by Kōken's army, which commanded the roads. The two sides soon engaged in a week-long battle that left Nakamaro dead and many of his followers executed for treason. The aftermath of the rebellion was eerily similar to the situation following the Gempei War, in which representatives of a powerful family had been destroyed. As with the conflict between the Taira and Minamoto, after the rebellion was over, Kōken continued to worry about the vengeful spirits of the dead, as well as the hostile intentions of their living descendants. The distribution of reliquary towers by the Empress can be compared to the rites performed by Chōgen, Go-Shirakawa, and others much later in the twelfth century.

mentioned, Qian Hongchu was no stranger to violence, having deposed his half-brother in a *coup d'état*, and fighting with the Later Zhou 後周 against the Southern Tang 南唐 in 956. Thus, Aśoka, Qian Hongchu, Kōken (and eventually, Go-Shirakawa), were united by a common predicament that precipitated a similar solution, showing the power of the Aśoka legend across space and time.

During Chōgen's reported three voyages to China, one of his most transformative experiences occurred at Ayuwangshan. In 1183, Chōgen described his encounter with the fervent relic worship of common people in China to Kanezane, who recorded the exchange in the *Gyokuyō*:

[Chōgen] said: "Ayuwangshan is named after the king who has one of his 84,000 [reliquary] towers installed at the mountain. These towers are square [at the base] and all are engraved exquisitely. At that time [of the ceremony I watched], golden towers were dedicated. During [the reign of Qian Hongchu], it was this [golden tower] that was [actually] presented by the emperor. This original tower was one *shaku* 尺 and four *sun* 寸 in height. When [I was at Ayuwangshan,] there were [also] silver towers and gilded bronze towers. As such, there were many types dedicated [for the ceremony]. The relic [inside the tower] had manifested all sorts of divine powers. Sometimes, [it] appeared in the form of a sixteen foot [Buddha statue]. Other times, it appeared as a small statue. [Yet] other times it emitted rays of light." This saint (i.e. Chōgen) twice [personally] witnessed the divine powers [of the relic]. One time [it emitted] light and the other time it [transformed] into a small statue [of the Buddha.] "However, in this Latter Period of the Law (末代), these [divine] events are rare," Chōgen said. "Nevertheless, in that country [of China], people put their faith [in Buddhism] foremost in their minds. The pilgrims [I saw who visited Ayuwangshan], some of whom were monks and others laymen, numbered five-hundred persons, or perhaps a thousand. They all begin the climb [to the temple] at the same time and displayed ardent, pure faith. They performed the ascent by prostrating after every three steps. Although the road [up to the temple] is not long, [this] can sometimes take three months or [even] half a year. Following their arrival at the temple, all [the pilgrims] chant the precious name of Śākyamuni. Altogether, they pray for [the manifestation of the relic's] divine powers. Whether the powers manifest themselves depends upon the seriousness of the sins [committed by



the pilgrims]. Truly this is an amazing event. How can the people of my realm [of Japan] possibly compare? Such a pity!” he said.<sup>172</sup>

Chōgen was clearly impressed with the faith in relics shared not only by Chinese monks, but also common laypeople. They performed the Ayuwangshan pilgrimage in a single throng, prostrating on their knees after every few steps of the ascent. In contrast, Chōgen regrets that the people of Japan lack such intense commitment to Buddhist practice.

What was Chōgen’s experience with relic worship like in the latter part of the Heian Period, prior to his voyage to China? The history of relic worship in the Japanese Shingon tradition traces back to Kūkai, who returned from his trip to Tang China with eighteen relic grains supposedly inherited from the South Indian esoteric monk, Vajrabodhi (金剛智), and which had passed through the hands of Amoghavajra and Huiguo 惠果 to Kūkai. Following his return to Japan, the relics were stored at Tōji. For special rites that required the use of the relics at the imperial palace, they were transported to the palace and then back to Tōji. According to a legendary account, Huiguo, Kukai’s Chinese master, fashioned a “wish-fulfilling jewel” known as the Nōsashōhōju 能作性宝珠, created by modifying a relic with incense and other substances, which Kūkai buried on Mt. Murō 室生山 in Nara.<sup>173</sup> Such lore would influence the Japanese understanding of the nature of relics in later centuries.

Chōgen was introduced to relic worship long before his trip to China, when he was still a novice at Daigoji. At that time, relic worship was a prominent feature of Esoteric practice at both Daigoji and Kajūji 観修寺, both leading temples within the Ono 小野 branch

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172. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 593-594. Also reprinted in Naitō (2012), p. 158.

173. Naitō (2006), p. 32.

of the Shingon School. According to contemporary Ono thought, relics were viewed as identical to wish-fulfilling jewels (*Sk. cintāmaṇi, J. nyoī hōju* 如意宝珠),<sup>174</sup> and identified the transformative power of the Buddhist *dharma* with the compassionate benevolence of the *cakravartin* secular monarch. In the 9th century, texts that depicted the “Wish-fulfilling [Jewel and Dharma-] Wheel Avalokiteśvara (Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪観音) were imported by Kūkai, and by the 10th century Avalokiteśvara was worshipped in the imperial palace, where monthly rituals were performed using statues of the bodhisattva.<sup>175</sup> Nyoirin Kannon was eventually recognized as a deity that guarded the life of the emperor, bolstering the relationship between the deity’s wish-fulfilling power and imperial authority. For secular rulers, wish-fulfilling jewels could serve the most pressing needs of the country as well as one’s personal desires: the health of the imperial family, the birth of imperial princes, and the fruitful harvests of the five grains. The *Latter Seven Day Rite* (*Goshichinichi no mishuhō* 後七日御修法) incorporated the wish-fulfilling jewel and was performed in the palace on the first month of every year to pray for these objectives, and served as part of a ritual schedule that included various other Ono School rites dedicated to Rāgarāja (Aizen myōō 愛染明王) and other deities.<sup>176</sup> These rituals, originally instituted by Kūkai, reinterpreted the imperial palace as a ceremonial space sanctioned and controlled by Kūkai’s Shingon School.<sup>177</sup>

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174. Naitō (2012), p. 158.

175. Rupert, p. 145-156.

176. Naitō (2006), p. 31. These other rites included the *Nyohō aizenhō* 如法愛染法 and the *Nyohō sonshōhō* 如法尊勝法.

177. Abé (1999), p. 354.

Access to the relics or wish-fulfilling jewels was restricted to the imperial family, high-ranking aristocrats, and administrators of select temples, notably Tōji. In medieval Japan, relics were thus the domain of the elite and had little relevance for common people.

In his youth, Chōgen performed relic ceremonies for the imperial and aristocratic families at Daigoji, with ceremonies for the wish-fulfilling jewel likely in his repertoire. According to the fifth fascicle of *The Record of Assorted Affairs of Daigoji* (醍醐雜事記 *Daigoji zatsuji ki*), when Chōgen was at the Enkōin, a Daigoji sub-temple, he performed the *Rishu zanmai* 理趣三昧 esoteric ritual<sup>178</sup> on multiple occasions. Enkōin was the site for the interred remains of Shirakawa's empress, Fujiwara no Kenshi 藤原賢子, and was constructed as a temple to pray for her enlightenment. The *Rishu zanmai* ritual was her yearly memorial service. Kenshi's remains were stored in a small, five color, gilt bronze tower at the temple.

Chōgen's first contact with worship of portable stupas was thus probably in the context of such rituals at Enkōin.<sup>179</sup> Because of Chōgen's experiences performing such an exclusive memorial service and the roles relics served in Japan more generally during this period, it is easy to see why he was so surprised by the sight of laypeople's fervid religious devotion to the relics stored at Ayuwangshan.

Chōgen's relationship with Ayuwangshan continued after his final trip to China. In Eisai's record of his own Chinese travels (*Eisai nittō engi* 栄西入唐縁起), he notes that "just before we were to return to Japan, Chōgen and I visited Ayuwangshan and were asked to help

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178. An esoteric rite with several parts including a *homa* (*J. goma* 護摩) fire ritual, and which centers upon the reading of the *Prajñāpāramitānaya-śatapañcaśatikā* (*J. Rishu kyō* 理趣經).

179. Naitō (2006), p. 32-33.

with the ongoing construction at the relic hall.” This was presumably the inducement for Chōgen’s “good works” project to send timber from the Suō estate to China for use in rebuilding the relic hall. Chinese records from the time confirm Chōgen’s role in the renovation process. The Southern Song poet Lou Yao’s 樓鑰 (1137-1213) inscription for the monk Miaozhi (*Ayuwangshan miaozhi chanshi taming* 阿育王山妙智禪師塔銘), dating from 1188, notes:

The king of Japan read [Miaozhi’s] *gāthā*, and in his own words proclaimed that because his very modest country follows Śākyamuni, he [would send] disciples to respectfully donate funds for the repair. Also, they brought quality timbers for rebuilding [the relic hall]. The materials were exquisite, and the design without comparison.”

日本國王閱師偈語。自言有所發明。至遜國以從釋氏。歲修弟子禮。辭幣甚恭。且以良材建舍利殿。器用精妙。莊嚴無比。<sup>180</sup>

Based on the context, the “king of Japan” refers to Go-Shirakawa, who, according to Lou Yao’s information, directed Chōgen to send lumber from Suō to Ayuwangshan. Suō was previously under Go-Shirakawa’s private management before it was passed on to Chōgen in order to finance and provide raw materials for the rebuilding of Tōdaiji, so Lou Yao’s account fits the known facts. That Lou Yao, one of the preeminent men of letters of his day, saw fit to comment on this episode shows that Chōgen’s act of good will toward Ayuwangshan was not just a personal act of devotion, but rose to the level of foreign relations between the two countries.<sup>181</sup>

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180. *Gongkuiji*, fascicle 110.

181. Taniguchi (2008), p. 51-52.

Chōgen's knowledge of continental Buddhism and familiarity with Hakata-based Chinese traders acquired during his unprecedented three trips to China would make him a desirable candidate for the *kanjin hijiri* charged with the reconstruction of Tōdaiji. Due to his own penchant for continental building styles, Go-Shirakawa had previously appointed construction managers with extensive Chinese contacts. For example, Go-Shirakawa chose Taira no Kiyomori to complete the Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 in 1164, a temple the retired emperor had long planned to house one thousand statues of Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara. A treasury was also constructed as part of the temple, and as head of the Taira clan since 1159, Kiyomori's clan's dominance over Sino-Japanese trade provided a unique opportunity to import items for the treasury's coffers.<sup>182</sup> Chōgen's knowledge of Chinese Buddhist architecture, ritual, and lay Buddhist society would all be put to use in his reconstruction of Tōdaiji.

## Conclusions

Over his long career, Chōgen benefited from Japanese aristocrats' interest in Chinese Buddhism, which grew from the mid-Heian period and exploded once Japan reopened official foreign relations with the Song. This interest manifested itself in the domain of Buddhism through Tiantai doctrinal exchange, the uptake of religious practices such as sutra burial and the installation of *kechien* lists in statues, as well as the construction of Song-style pagodas by the elite. Members of the Murakami Genji and Taira, Sinophiles in their own right, helped Chōgen to obtain his dream of continental travel. Chōgen almost certainly

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182. Gomi, p. 90.

found passage with Hakata-based Chinese merchants to the port city of Ningbo, where he followed the southern itineraries of monks who had ventured to the continent in previous times, aspiring to obtain a complete Buddhist canon as a symbol of his journey's success. Chōgen made pilgrimages to Tiantaishan and Ayuwangshan, where relic worship would inspire him to reimagine the prospects for the promulgation of Buddhism in his own country. In the next chapter, we will explore the debt Chōgen's Pure Land faith owed to Chinese models of religious practice he encountered during his travels.

## **Chapter 2.**

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### **Models: Influence of Chinese Pure Land on Chōgen**

Chōgen's most concrete expression of his Pure Land faith was the establishment of Pure Land *bessho* 別所,<sup>1</sup> or satellite temples, on many of the estates whose revenues or raw materials were used for the reconstruction of Tōdaiji from the time Chōgen was appointed *kanjin hijiri* in 1181. Chōgen listed seven of these estates in his *Sazenshū* – the Tōdaiji *bessho*, the Kōyasan *shinbessho* 高野山新別所, the Watanabe *bessho* 渡辺別所, the Iga *bessho* 伊賀別所, the Harima *bessho* 播磨別所, the Bitchū *bessho* 備中別所, and the Suō *bessho* 周防別所. Chōgen's *bessho* all included Pure Land Halls (*J. Jōdodō* 浄土堂) with the exception of the Kōyasan *shinbessho*. Another such hall was constructed by Chōgen on a Bizen estate, though he did not refer to Bizen explicitly as a "*bessho*."<sup>2</sup> Each of these Pure Land halls had an image of Amitābha as the central object of worship, and served as a place

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1. The term "*bessho*" refers literally to a "separate place," though it need not be far removed from the main temple complex to which it belonged. There were seven *bessho* built by Chōgen in service of Tōdaiji, generally referenced by the names of the provinces in which they were constructed. However, there was also a *bessho* built at Tōdaiji itself. In this thesis, I italicize *bessho* as a general term, and leave the proper names for individual *bessho* (e.g. Harima *bessho*) in regular face. Thus, "Tōdaiji *bessho*" refers generally to the seven *bessho* constructed around the country on Tōdaiji estates, while "Tōdaiji *bessho*" refers specifically to the *bessho* built on the grounds Tōdaiji itself. Chōgen uses the term "*bessho*" exclusively, but similar structures were sometimes known as "*betsuin*" 別院 from the late 8th century (Adolphson, p. 228).

2. *Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 482-495.

for the recitation of Amitābha's name (*nembutsu*), in addition to other religious practices.<sup>3</sup> Chōgen's Pure Land halls also served as the geographical nodes for a massive network of Pure Land devotees who assisted in one way or another with the Tōdaiji reconstruction. This Pure Land network had few precedents in Japan, but imitated the characteristics of Song Pure Land societies formed from the late 10th century. Chōgen's inspiration for his Pure Land halls and the accompanying Pure Land network was thus likely rooted in prototypes he saw during his voyages to China. What characteristics distinguished institutionalized Pure Land societies for lay believers during the Song, and how did these societies relate to the institutions and Buddhist social network Chōgen would ultimately found upon his return to Japan?

### **Common laypersons in Chinese and Japanese tales of rebirth**

One way to gauge institutional attitudes towards the dissemination of Pure Land ideas among the common populace in China and Japan during Chōgen's time was through a genre of Buddhist literature from the period known as "tales of rebirth" (C. *wangshengzhuan*, J. *ōjōden* 往生傳). For lay devotees in Song China and Heian Japan, rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land was attainable even for those who declined the rigors of monastic life. Moreover, rebirth in the Pure Land was not simply a theoretical possibility, but also an "empirically" substantiated reality – the pseudo-biographies of past devotees who had attained the Pure Land were compiled in tales of rebirth collections, which were presented as verified stories of

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3. The Pure Land Hall originally on the Harima bessho still remains, and is known now as Jōdoji 浄土寺. The architecture of this temple, along with the excavated remains of the Kayanomori-dō built in 1155 by Chōgen, are both thought to derive from Song building styles.



soteriological success. While biographies of eminent monks (*gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳) had long been an established genre in China since circa 530, tales of rebirth differed in their inclusion of both monastics and laypersons who attained the Pure Land through a combination of their faith and Amitābha's grace. Examples of the tales of rebirth genre generally followed a similar format. They illustrated the miraculous signs that appeared at the death of one's relatives or friends and signified their reincarnation in Amitābha's paradise. These signs consisted of any number of sounds, sights, and smells at or around the moment of death, for example a vision in a dream; the sight of Amitābha's descent; the appearance of rays of golden light, music from the heavens, or purple clouds; or the scent of a sweet fragrance.<sup>4</sup> While this type of literature was also reproduced in Japan, by the latter half of the 12th century the examples produced in China and Japan differed in authorship, scope and audience. Song tales of rebirth were entirely compiled by monks, while in Japan early examples were compiled by literati officials. Also, while Song tales of rebirth increasingly embraced accounts of lay commoners, Heian and early Kamakura tales of rebirth continued to chronicle the lives of monks and officials of aristocratic lineages. Later Chinese examples

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4. Shimura summarizes the miraculous signs present in many Japanese tales of rebirth. See, for example, p. 178-184 for the miraculous signs that appear in the *Shūi ōjōden* and *Goshūi ōjōden*. An early prototype for tales of rebirth may have been the story of Queen Vaidehī from the *Contemplation Sutra*. In that text, Vaidehī is imprisoned by her son, Ajāsatru, and implores the Buddha to instruct her in a doctrine that would offer escape from this realm of suffering. The Buddha graciously appears in response, and promptly explains the Sixteen Visualizations, a method for seeking Pure Land rebirth that would later become widespread in China. The Vaidehī template provided ample material for later writers to imitate in their own "biographies," moralizing on the nature of sin, suffering, and ultimate salvation. It required only a slight adjustment of the cultural context for an East Asian audience. An example is the story of Lady Yueguo (Yueguo furen 越國夫人) from Zongxiao's *Topical Anthology of the Land of Bliss* (*Lebang wenlei* 樂邦文類). See T47, n. 1969, p. 189c9-190a27 and Stevenson (2007) for his translation.

of the genre were intended for narration to an audience of common people, while Japanese examples maintained an elite readership. During the period of Chōgen's travels to China, the production of Chinese tales of rebirth accorded with the more inclusive form of Pure Land social organization Chōgen would encounter during his voyages in Ningbo and Hangzhou, which attracted monks, scholar-officials, and commoners in networks of devotees that transcended traditional class distinctions.

The first tales of rebirth from the Song Dynasty primarily included biographies of monks. Of these, only the preface of Zunshi's 遵式 (964-1032) early-11th century *Short Biographies of Rebirth in the West* (*Wangsheng xifang lüezhuan* 往生西方略傳) remains, and so little is known about the identities of the thirty-three individuals included except that they originated from India and China. A later work, Jiezu's 傑珠 *Biographies of Pure Land Rebirth* (*Jingtu wangzhengzhuan* 淨土往生傳, 1064), appropriated twenty-five biographies of monks and nuns from previous works in the eminent monk genre, including the *Eminent Monks of Three Generations* (*Sandai gaosengzhuan* 三代高僧傳). Wanggu's 王古 *Newly Compiled Biography of Rebirths* (*Xinxiu wangshengzhuan* 新修往生傳, ca. 1084),<sup>5</sup> was similar in scope. The author was a monk at Huilinsi 慧林寺 in Kaifeng and primarily documented dharma heirs. Each of these 11th century works, then, exclusively reviewed the lives of monastics who attained the Pure Land.

From at least the mid-12th century, however, the Chinese tales of rebirth genre began to incorporate a significant number of biographies from the general population. For example, Hong Mai's 洪邁 *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志 (1162), a compendium of miraculous tales that includes

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5. X78, n. 1546

tales of rebirth, contains the biography of an illiterate wet nurse, who learned the basics of Chan meditation by shadowing her devoutly Buddhist mistress. Though the wet nurse failed to comprehend these meditation exercises, they eventually led her to embrace the recitation of Amitābha's name and attainment of his Pure Land.<sup>6</sup> A major example of the inclusion of common devotees in the genre is the *Records of the Founding of Pure Land Buddhism* (*Jingtu lijiaozhi* 淨土立教志), collected in Zhipan's *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (1269). Many of the biographies in the *Records of the Founding of Pure Land Buddhism* are from a much earlier date, including from Lu Shishou's 陸師壽 *Collection of Pure Land Pearls* (*Jingtu baozhu ji* 淨土寶珠集, 1155), which was in turn edited by the monk Jiezhū 戒珠 and published as the *Tales of Pure Land Rebirth* (*Jingtu wangsheng zhuan* 淨土往生傳)<sup>7</sup> in 1236. Zhipan eventually compiled the records for the *Fozu tongji* using one or both sources. What is distinctive about the biographies in the *Records of the Founding of Pure Land Buddhism* is that they chronicled the lives of common people, mostly from the Song,<sup>8</sup> and summarize popular *nianfo* practices in simple terms for the uninitiated. Their author(s) also discarded the ornate language of preceding works, suggesting the biographies were written for oral narration to the illiterate. The collection includes three hundred persons from many social and professional backgrounds. Some fall into elite social classes, but in general represent a diversity of class distinctions, including: (1) eminent monks (*gaoseng* 高僧, 134 biographies), (2) eminent nuns (*gaoni* 高尼, 7), (3) assorted persons (*zazhong* 雜眾, 5), (4)

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6. Ter Haar, p. 17-18.

7. T51, n. 2071.

8. Takao, p. 116.

officials (*gongqing* 公卿, 30), (5) scholars and commoners (*shishu* 士庶, 23), (6) women (*nülan* 女倫, 43), (7) malefactors (*ebei* 惡輩, 5), (8) birdcatchers and fisherman (*qinyu* 禽魚, 4), and continued biographies from other sources (*xuyi* 續遺, 10). Examples of common people in the collection include a blacksmith from Huiji 會稽 named Li Yantong 李彥通, a hunter named Feng Min 馮珉, an iron worker from Siming 思明 named Ji Gong 計公, a farmer from Jiaying 嘉興 named Xu Liugong 徐六公, a merchant from Lin'an 臨安 named Shen Sanlang 沈三郎, a fisherman from Huiji named Jinshi 金奩, and a former monk turned villain named Wuqiong 吳瓊. Because each of these persons reflected a range of backgrounds, the text advanced the idea that Pure Land faith, practice, and rebirth indiscriminately applied to all earnest devotees, regardless of class or level of education.<sup>9</sup>

Japanese examples of tales of rebirth literature appeared from the mid-Heian Period, but unlike their Song counterparts, continued primarily to chronicle monastics and officials of aristocratic bearing to the exclusion of the lower classes. The first Japanese example was published in 985 by the scholar Yoshishige no Yasutane 慶滋保胤 (931–1002) under the title *Record of Japanese Born into the Pure Land* (*Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* 日本往生極樂記). Yasutane was a Confucian scholar and one of the instrumental figures in forming the Assembly for the Encouragement of Learning (Kangakue 勧学会), a small society discussed further below. He was heavily influenced by the monk Genshin's *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集), and Yasutane's tales of rebirth compilation was intended as a record of the meditation upon Amitābha advocated by Genshin.<sup>10</sup> Yasutane's work contains

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9. Takao, p. 117.

10. Kotas, p. 68-69.

a total of forty-five biographies, of which about three-fourths are clergy, and the rest aristocrats.

There were seven other contributions to the tales of rebirth genre in the Heian and early Kamakura Periods: (1) Ōe no Masafusa's 大江匡房 *Continued Biographies of Rebirth from This Realm* (*Zoku honchō ōjōden* 続本朝往生伝, 984), (2) Miyoshi Tameyasu's 三善為康 *Gleanings of Biographies of Rebirth* (*Shūi ōjōden* 拾遺往生伝, 1111-1139), as well as (3) the same author's *Subsequent Gleanings of Biographies of Rebirth* (*Goshūi ōjōden* 後拾遺往生伝, 1137-1139), (4) Renzen's 蓮禅 *Three Former Records of Rebirth* (*Sange ōjōki* 三外往生記, after 1139), (5) Fujiwara Munetomo's 藤原宗友 (active 12th c.?) *Newly Compiled Biographies of Rebirth from This Realm* (*Honchō shinshū ōjōden* 本朝新修往生伝), (6) Nyojaku's 如寂 (active late-12th c.) *Biographies of Rebirth from Kōyasan* (*Kōyasan ōjōden* 高野山往生伝), and (7) Gyōsen's 行仙 (?-1278) *Biographies of Amitābha Recitation and Rebirth* (*Nembutsu ōjōden* 念仏往生伝.)<sup>11</sup> Masafusa was a literati official of high rank, and his work (1) concerned personal acquaintances in the capital and Dazaifu 太宰府, including emperors, other high ranking court nobles, and aristocratic monks of the Tendai School.<sup>12</sup> Tameyasu's first compilation (2) followed closely in the vein of his predecessors, chronicling the Pure Land rebirths of monks and a few lay nobles.<sup>13</sup> Tameyasu's second compilation (3) includes about sixty percent monks, with the remainder mostly representatives from the

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11. Summaries of the early Japanese *Ōjōden* collections can be found at the end of the *Koten isan no kaihen* edited volume, *Ōjōden no kenkyū*, p. 259-282.

12. See Shimura, Ch. 4. Pages 140-141 contain a partial list of the individuals recorded.

13. *Koten isan no kaihen*, ed., p. 267.

warrior class. The remaining Japanese *ōjōden* (4, 5, 6, and 7) were composed by monks, and illustrate a similarly narrow range of interests. Renzen's work is a re-edited Chinese language (*kanbun* 漢文) edition of Yasutane, Masafusa, and Tameyasu's previous biographies. Nyojaku's work (6) is limited to monks and *hijiri* who attained the Pure Land while practicing on Kōyasan.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Gyōsen's work (7) focuses on members of the warrior class devoted to the exclusive *nembutsu* (*senshū nembutsu* 専修念仏) recitation preached by Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263).<sup>15</sup> Following Gyōsen, there were no further contributions to the genre until the Edo Period, partially because of the growth of Pure Land sectarian belief that emphasized salvation through the "other power" of Amitābha (*tariki* 他力), precluding the possibility of salvation through one's own efforts.<sup>16</sup> Another explanation for the discontinuation of the genre is that the increasing frequency of mortuary rituals (*tsuizen kuyō*) performed by relatives of the deceased displaced the Pure Land deathbed rites that encouraged documenting miraculous indications of Pure Land rebirth.<sup>17</sup>

Comparing Chinese and Japanese examples of the tales of rebirth genre illustrates differing attitudes toward the dissemination of Pure Land ideas by religious institutions among common people. By sometime in the 12th century, Chinese monks began to compose and/or compile tales about common laypersons that could be narrated to lower, illiterate

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

15. Shimura, p. 331.

16. Kotas, p. 199.

17. Stone, p. 107-108.

classes in order to spread Pure Land devotion and practice outside the monastic environment. In comparison, Japanese composers of tales of rebirth targeted the interests of an elite readership of monks and aristocrats. The differences between Chinese and Japanese examples of the genre during the period of Chōgen's travels to China underlines the differing interactions between Buddhist institutions and common people in the two countries when it came to the spread of Pure Land worship during the Song. As we will see, these differences were tangibly realized in the formation of institutional Pure Land societies during this period that welcomed common devotees. On the other hand, such societies had no counterpart in Japan before Chōgen developed his Pure Land network after returning from China.

### **Chinese imperial patronage of Buddhism and Pure Land societies during the Song**

During the Song Dynasty, government support was integral to the foundation of the first Pure Land societies. The societies of Shengchang 省常 (959-1020), Zunshi 遵式 (964-1032), and Zhili 知禮 (960-1028) were all formed during the reign of Taizong 太宗 (r. 976-997), the second emperor of the Northern Song, or just after during the reign of his son, Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997-1022). Taizong lavished considerable subsidies on the Buddhist establishment in his recently unified state, and successfully encouraged the integration of the Buddhism into the civil service bureaucracy. Zhenzong continued most of his father's policies toward institutionalized Buddhism after inheriting the throne. Understanding the formation of institutionalized, lay Pure Land societies in the early Song requires an appreciation of the depth of Taizong's involvement in Buddhism. A number of the scholar-officials who joined the Pure Land organizations of Shengchang and Zunshi were heavily encouraged, if not compelled, to do so by the emperor himself. This active, imperial

promotion of Pure Land societies among civil service officials during Taizong's reign also provides a model for postulating the interaction between Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (1162-1189) and the Pure Land societies Chōgen encountered during the Southern Song, which continued to benefit from strong membership from the civil service. In Zhili's society, these members, in turn, would become recruiters for common households that were encouraged to send their own representatives to the Pure Land society's gatherings.

Taizong's endorsements of Buddhism were legion. He established dozens of temples in the capital of Bianjing and renovated temples on Wutaishan. The emperor was also keen to welcome foreign monks to his court and honor Chinese monks of high attainment. Taizong replenished the monastic registers, ordaining over 170,000 monks between the years 976 and 982 according to Zanning 贊寧 (920–1001). However, Taizong's greatest contribution to Buddhism was possibly the establishment of a sutra translation group known as the "Institute for Translations" (Yijingyuan 譯經院) at Taipingxingguosi 太平興國寺<sup>18</sup> in 980, led by the Kashmiri monk and translator Tianxizai 天息災 (active 989-1000).<sup>19</sup> The Song translation teams were large, involving five foreign monks who served as translators, as well as seventy-five transcribers, composers and translation certifiers.<sup>20</sup> In 983, Taizong

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18. This temple was founded by Taizong and named after his first reign year, Taipingxingguo 太平興國 (976-984). From the name of the temple (lit. "Great Peace and National Restoration"), it is clear that Taizong viewed the institution as part of his plans to restore China under his imperial leadership after the period of disunion during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

19. Satō, p. 98-99.

20. Kamikawa, p. 26.



sponsored the first printed edition of the Buddhist canon, whose woodblocks were carved in Sichuan (*Shu* 蜀) and then transported to the capital for printing at Taipingxingguosi.<sup>21</sup>

Taizong wrote his own texts associated with Buddhism. In 986, he authored a foreword to the newly translated corpus of texts produced by Tianxizai under the title *Preface to the Tripiṭaka Holy Teaching* (*Sanzang shengjiaoyu* 三藏聖教序), and later a compendium entitled *Collection of Buddha Vehicle Literature* (*Focheng wenji* 佛乘文集). The latter received comments from the Zhejiang monks registrar (*senglu* 僧錄) and in 990 was sent as a gift to the Goryeo King. Other Buddhist texts written by the emperor include the *Mizangquan* 秘藏詮, *Lushi* 錄識, and *Xiaoyaoyong* 逍遙詠, all of which were added to the Buddhist canon in 996.<sup>22</sup>

Taizong's imperial sponsorship of Buddhism extended to members of his court, whom he ordered to participate in a variety of Buddhist activities, including his imperially sanctioned translation project. After foreign translators<sup>23</sup> were assigned to the Institute for Translations, Taizong directed officials from his ministries to work as style editors (*runwen* 潤文) for the translators' drafts. Yet other officials were ordered to act as "observers" of the Institute's activities.<sup>24</sup> Several officials who participated in the production of Buddhist translations were also members of Shengchang's Purifying Practice Society, the earliest large-

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21. Satō, p. 98-99.

22. Satō, p. 99-100.

23. Apart from Tianxizai, these also included Fatian 法天 (*S. Dharmadeva*) and Shihu 施護 (*S. Dānapāla*).

24. The exact responsibility of this official is unclear, but the title of the position was "guardian" or "observer" (監護).

scale Pure Land society of the Song. Zhu Ang 朱昂, who authored a “Joining the Society” poem upon enrolling in Shengchang’s society, and Dingwei 丁謂, who composed the *Preface to the Poetry of the West Lake Devotional Society* (*Xihu jieshe shixu* 西湖結社詩序) about Shengchang’s group, were both commanded to serve as style editors in 998 by Zhenzong.<sup>25</sup>

Taizong’s ultimate objective was to transform Buddhism into a national religion that would serve as a guide for rectification of the self and the virtuous implementation of government, similar to the role served by the prescriptions of the Chinese Classics. Taizong aimed to impress his perspective on the highly-placed scholar-officials of the bureaucracy:

[The emperor] instructed his prime minister, saying, “the teaching of the Buddhists is favorable for governing, and universally benefits all beings. Those with great ability understand this fundamental truth, while the ignorant produce slander. I profoundly understand this teaching of the [Buddhist] Way. Regarding oneself, always have a correct mind and be unselfish. This is to practice self-improvement. Continuously perform good deeds and bring tranquility to all under heaven. This is to practice for the benefit of others. The example of Emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝, who gave away his body to become a servant,<sup>26</sup> is [to adopt] the narrow view of Hinayana.<sup>27</sup> For later generations, this [style of rule] is not a suitable method.” Zhaopu 趙普 (922-992) replied, “Your Majesty uses the way of Yao and Shun 堯舜<sup>28</sup> to

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25. Satō, p. 98-100.

26. Liang Wudi, like Taizong after him, was a grand supporter of Buddhism, and several times became a monk in order to entice the court to “buy” him back through sizable donations to the sangha. “To give away one’s body” or “sacrifice oneself” (*shesheng* 捨身) also means to “become a monk” in the Buddhist context. Taizong disapproved of Wudi’s actions.

27. A term for the early “vehicle” of Buddhism described in early texts before the rise of the bodhisattva ideal that characterized Mahāyāna Buddhism. Taizong may be implying that Liang Wudi was concerned primarily with his own salvation, which induced him to become a monk, rather than the salvation of his subjects.

28. Two of three legendary sage kings who for thousands of years have represented the ideal of moral government in Chinese literature.

govern. He uses the practices of the Tathāgata to cultivate his mind. His sagely wisdom [reaches] high and far. There are no imperial subjects who do not know this.

示宰臣曰。佛氏之教有裨政理普利群生。達者自悟淵源。愚者妄生誣謗。朕於此道微識其宗。凡為君而正心無私。即自利行也。凡行一善以安天下。即利他行也。如梁武捨身為奴。此小乘偏見。非後代所宜法也。趙普對曰。陛下以堯舜之道治世。以如來之行修心。聖智高遠非臣下所能知也。<sup>29</sup>

Taizong used his position as overseer of the final imperial exam<sup>30</sup> for the civil service exam system (*keju* 科舉) as a means to propagate his ideas about Buddhism and government by assessing future ministers prior to their promotion. He met with all candidates and his input was crucial in the decision to pass or fail them.<sup>31</sup> As a result, candidates who aimed to secure their upward mobility were no doubt forced to adapt to Taizong's views about Buddhism, regardless of their private beliefs concerning the mingling of religion and government.

The clearest case of Taizong's influence over one of his officials was Su Yijian 蘇易簡 (958-996), who was criticized in 989 by the emperor for referring to the Buddha as a "barbarian." In just the following year, Su authored a compilation called the *Records of the Sages of the Three Teachings* (*Sanjiao shengxian lu* 三教聖賢錄), a set of collected biographies of the "saints" of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. During this period, Su also joined Shengchang's Pure Land society based in Hangzhou, and by 991 was so immersed in the group's activities that he was chosen to compose the preface to

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29. T49, n. 2035, p. 399a6-13.

30. Otherwise known as the "palace exam" (*dianshi* 殿試).

31. Satō, p. 100-101. Reprinted from *Zhu xianrenshe shi* 諸賢人社詩.

Shengchang's copy of the "Purifying Practices" Chapter of the *Avatamsaka sutra* that Shengchang had written in his own blood.<sup>32</sup> Over the course of just two years, Su transformed from a Buddhist critic into a prominent member of perhaps the most influential Pure Land society (or Buddhist society of any kind, for that matter) of his day.<sup>33</sup> In his "Joining the Society" poem expressing his devotion to Shengchang's Society, Su gives his name as "the Purifying Practices disciple, Palace Steward, and Participant in Determining Governmental Matters, Su Yijian (*Jingxing dizi geishizhong canzhi zhengshi Su yijian* 淨行弟子給事中參知政事蘇易簡). In his poem, Su writes:

Long ago I retired to Aoshan 鼇山; reading the *Avatamsaka* work on Purifying Practices.  
My poems sit humbly next to [Xie] Lingyun 謝靈運,<sup>34</sup> my preface unworthy of [my master's] great deed,<sup>35</sup>  
We rush about this soiled world ne'er a pause; yet refuge in incense will guide our path,<sup>36</sup>  
Surveying this Lotus Society of revered men; the view like reaching the Four Meditative Heavens.<sup>37</sup>

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32. See below.

33. Satō, p. 100-101.

34. Xie Lingyun (385–433) was one of the great poets of his day and a Buddhist devotee.

35. "Great deed" is not a literal translation. Su refers to Shengchang's version of the "Purifying Practices" chapter with the expression "*zhaolin*" 照鄰, implying his work had a transformative aspect upon society.

36. Literally, "establish a connection" (*youyuan* 有緣). In other words, by taking refuge in the Buddha, one will give rise to the conditions of enlightenment.

37. Reprinted in Satō, p. 101. The Four Meditative Heavens refer to the heavens of the Realm of Form in Buddhist cosmology into which one is born upon attaining a high degree of meditative insight.

Without Taizong's coercion, Su's transformation from Buddhist detractor to devotee, embodied in his poem, seems difficult to imagine. Taizong clearly wielded enormous power over the disposition of scholar-bureaucrats toward his favored religion.

Taizong still reigned during the formation of Zunshi's Pure Land society, but passed away before Zhili organized his own. While Taizong's successor, Zhenzong, is often characterized as a Daoist sympathizer, he continued most of the Buddhist-related policies of his father – patronizing clergy, welcoming foreign monks at his court, composing prefaces for new Buddhist editions, and supporting translation of newly imported scriptures. Zhenzong took a complimentary view of both Buddhism and Daoism, contributing to the prosperity of both religions.<sup>38</sup> For this reason, we may suspect that all three of the Pure Land societies formed by Shengchang, Zunshi, and Zhili benefitted from imperial patronage, including in the area of civil service participation.

Taizong's active endorsement of Pure Land societies among his scholar officials also provides a precedent for understanding the much later relationship between Emperor Xiaozong and the Pure Land society(-ies) Chōgen encountered during his final visit(s) to China. Chōgen's three trips likely corresponded to the reigns of two Chinese emperors. As hypothesized in Chapter 1, if Chōgen first traveled to China before the 1155 construction of the Kayanomori-dō, and completed his last voyage by the 1176 Kōyasan bell inscription, then Chōgen's first visit coincided with the reign of Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127-1162), and his third visit likely coincided with the reign of Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162-1189). The second visit could have taken place during either sovereign's reign.

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38. Ebrey, p. 81-84.

Gaozong and Xiaozong could not have been more different in their approach to religion. Gaozong demonstrated no desire to actively promote or understand Buddhism or Daoism. He considered the award of ordination certificates to monks to have a baleful impact on the country since ordained monks were removed from tax rolls and contributed no labor. While he did not actively persecute the religious establishment, Gaozong advocated limiting new ordination certificates in order to maintain a higher tax base and gradually erode the influence of Buddhist and Daoist institutions. By 1157, the number of legally ordained Buddhist monks had dropped to 200,000, leaving many monasteries unstaffed.<sup>39</sup> During Chōgen's first trip to China, the Buddhist clergy must have expressed deep worries over declining government support. However, by Chōgen's third trip, Gaozong had probably retired, paving the way for Xiaozong to assume the throne. Though Xiaozong's temple name implies that he was remembered as a filial son, he served as a Buddhist advocate, unlike his father. His contributions to the Buddhist establishment included a commentary on the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* (*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經) and construction of a Buddhist temple within the palace compound. In 1175, he visited Upper Tianzhusi and contributed a substantial sum for improvements.<sup>40</sup> Xiaozong was also known for his absolutist tendencies, weakening the civil service in order to rule more directly.<sup>41</sup> Xiaozong's unyielding support for Buddhism and dominance over the bureaucracy is in many ways analogous to his predecessor, Taizong, who successfully encouraged many high-ranking officials to join emergent Pure Land groups

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39. *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 94-95.

41. Ortiz, p. 21.

associated with major temples. If Xiaozong followed Taizong's example, enlisting his officials in the Pure Land societies of Ningbo and Hangzhou during his reign in the Southern Song, it would help explain the vibrance of Zhili's society around the time of Chōgen's visits, almost two-hundred years after its founding.

### **Pure Land halls in China as prototypes for Chōgen's bessho**

The profusion of Pure Land hall construction in China began during the Tang 唐 Dynasty (618-907). During this period, separate buildings, halls, or practice areas (*daochang* 道場) specifically intended for Pure Land devotional worship were constructed on the sites of larger temple compounds. These halls were known by several names, including “Pure Land hall” (*jingtu tang* 淨土堂), the terminology favored by Chōgen, or “Pure Land institute” (*jingtu yuan* 淨土院). They were vital for the propagation of Pure Land practice within existing temples and provided tangible locations for the local lay community to worship. An example of such a hall included the one founded by a Shandao-lineage disciple, Huaiyun 懷惲 (640-701), at Wenguosi 溫國寺 in Chang'an 長安, the Tang capital. There he installed an Amitābha (Emitufo 阿彌陀佛) triptych composed of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin 觀音), and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Shizhi 勢至) – an altar arrangement with little or no precedent. Huaiyun may have been the first to use this particular set of deities as an altar triptych, at least at a major institution.<sup>42</sup> Another Pure Land hall was established by Fazhao 法照 (active 8th c.) at Zhangjingsi 章敬寺 in Chang'an in order to practice the five methods of reciting

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42. *Datang shijisi gusizhu huaiyun fengchizeng longchandafashi beiming bingxu* 大唐實際寺故寺主懷惲奉敕贈隆闡大法師碑銘並序, in *Quan tang wen* 全唐文, fascicle 916. Also see Takao, p. 113.

Amitābha's name (*wuhui nianfo* 五會念佛), which prescribed five variances of pitch and speed to use in one's recitations.<sup>43</sup> Both Liangsu's 梁肅 *Qiyuansi Jingtuyuan zhi* 祇園寺淨土園志 and Liuzi's 柳子 *Longxingsi xiu jingtuyuan ji* 龍興寺修淨土院記 contain lists of many Pure Land halls established in temples across China during this period.<sup>44</sup>

During this time, the constant ambulation meditation (*changxing sanmei* 常行三昧) was also popularized on Tiantaishan. This was one of the four categories of Tiantai meditation advanced by Zhiyi, and required a special facility, known as a "hall for constant

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43. A copy of Fazhao's manual explaining this procedure, the *Jingtu wuhui nianfo luefashi yizan* 淨土五會念佛略法事儀讚, was brought to Japan by Ennin according to his record of items procured in Japan (*Nittō shingu shōgyō mokuroku* 入唐新求聖教目錄). See T55, n. 2167, p. 1085a19. According to Fazhao, these five methods are: "(1) to intone 'Nawu emitufo' slowly in a level pitch (第一會平聲緩念南無阿彌陀佛), (2) to intone 'Nawu emitufo' slowly with a higher pitch (第二會平上聲緩念南無阿彌陀佛), (3) to intone 'Nawu emitufo' neither slowly nor quickly (第三會非緩非急念南無阿彌陀佛), (4) to intone 'Nawu emitufo' at a gradually quickening pace (第四會漸急念南無阿彌陀佛), and (5) to intone the four character 'Emitufo' at a fast pace (第五會四字轉急念阿彌陀佛)." According to Fazhao, the first method eliminates chaotic thoughts, the second method establishes a karmic connection [with Amitābha] everywhere, the third method produces an elegant and refined sound, the fourth method produces a mourning wail, and the fifth method shocks and scatters the demons, enabling the reciter to enter into a deep meditative state. See T47, n. 1983, p. 476c2.

44. Takao, p. 111-113.



ambulation” (*changxing tang* 常行堂).<sup>45</sup> This type of hall impressed Saichō and Ennin during their trips to China, and was constructed on Hieizan by Ennin in the 9th century. Zhiyi’s constant ambulation meditation in turn was based on the *Sutra of the Samadhi of Buddhas that Manifest Themselves in the Present* (*Banzhou sanmeijing* 般舟三昧經),<sup>46</sup> the first translation of which was attributed to Lokakṣema (C. Zhi Loujiachen 支婁迦讖, active ca. 150 CE). This sutra also inspired other meditation halls known as *banzhouyuan* 般舟院 or *banzhou daochang* 般舟道場 that took their names directly from the sutra.<sup>47</sup> The sutra explains the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* (*banzhou sanmei* 般舟三昧),<sup>48</sup> for which the practitioner envisions the manifestation of Amitābha in the practice space. Along with Zhiyi’s writings on the constant ambulation meditation, the sutra established an understanding of the identity

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45. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Pure Land Buddhism was never a distinct institution through the Song Dynasty in China, but was a set of doctrines and texts that were incorporated into existing schools, most notably Tiantai. Two Tiantai monks, Zongxiao 宗曉 (1151-1214) and Zhipan 志磐 (f. 1258-1269) created the sense of an independent lineage of Pure Land patriarchs in compilations of biographies that appeared in the *Compendium of the Land of Bliss* (*Lebang wenlei*) and *Comprehensive History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* (*Fozu tongji*). Tiantai monks were also the chief promoters of Pure Land societies from the Northern Song. The most important of these Tiantai Pure Land societies were located at Baoyunsi 寶雲寺 and Yanqingsi 延慶寺, discussed below (see Getz, 1999 and Shinohara for more details). In this dissertation, I will not deeply explore the linkages between Tiantai and Pure Land in China, since the organizational principles of the Pure Land societies Chōgen imported to Japan were more or less stripped of their Tiantai trappings and integrated into a new doctrinal milieu appropriate to Chōgen’s Japanese Esoteric Buddhist training.

46. T13, n. 418.

47. One such hall was built by Fazhao on the Southern Peak (Nanyue 南嶽) in current-day Hunan Province, for example.

48. “Transliteration of the Sanskrit, meaning ‘meditation in which the buddhas of the present stand before one.’ In this *samādhi*, the buddhas of the ten directions are seen as clearly as the stars at night” (*DDB*).

of Amitābha's Pure Land with this world of suffering in a fashion that suited Buddhist concepts of nonduality:<sup>49</sup>

Just as the sage Ānanda is in the presence of the World-Honored One at this very moment, intimately listening to the dharma, receiving and upholding it all, and practicing it in the manner explained, [so too] the bodies of all those bodhisattvas continue to dwell in this land and, without traveling to other worlds, are yet able to perceive all the Buddhas – the world-honored ones – hear the *dharma*, receive and uphold it all, and cultivate it in the manner explained. From that time onwards, in whatever place he dwells, he will never be far from all the Buddhas.<sup>50</sup>

Some Pure Land meditation halls attempted to duplicate the composition of Amitābha's Pure Land as narrated in scripture through the construction of pavilions, ponds, and gardens. For example, the monk Cong Ya 從雅<sup>51</sup> of Qiantang 錢塘 built an Amitābha Treasure Pavilion (*Mida baoge* 彌陀寶閣) at Jingzhusi 淨住寺, where he installed a central statue of Amitābha encircled by nine bodhisattvas that represented the Nine Classes (*C. jiupin* 九品) of rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land. Later, a lotus pond was added in front, with left and right wings containing rooms for meditation practice.<sup>52</sup> Such architectural concepts were also employed in Japan, the most notable example being Fujiwara no Yorimichi's 藤原賴通

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49. In the Tiantai tradition, Zhiyi would replace explanations of nonduality with the teaching of mutual inclusiveness (*vinian sanqian* 一念三千), though the concept is more or less the same.

50. Translation: Sharf, p. 117-118. Sharf also provides a short discussion on the *Banzhou sanmeijing*.

51. Biography in *FZTJ*, p. 212a9-a29. Cong Ya's exact dates unknown, but he was the disciple of Huiban 慧辯 (1014-1073) according to T49, n. 2035, p. 209c15, so Cong Ya's Amitābha Treasure Pavilion was probably constructed around the time that Byōdōin was converted into a temple.

52. T47, n. 1969A, p. 0184c5-185a5. Also see Takao, p. 113-114.

(992-1074) Byōdōin 平等院 in Uji, for which the Phoenix Hall was constructed in 1052. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Chōgen installed nine statues of Amitābha at the Kayanomori-dō, following in the footsteps of Cong Ya.

By the Southern Song, Pure Land halls were a pervasive feature of Chinese Buddhist temple construction, particularly in Hangzhou, Ningbo and on Tiantaishan, the three most prominent locales for Tiantai Pure Land practice. One of the most recurrent types of Pure Land halls within the Tiantai tradition in the Southern Song were halls for sixteen visualizations (*shiliu guantang* 十六觀堂), based on the sixteen visualizations of Amitābha's Pure Land described in the *Contemplation Sutra*. One of the earliest examples of this type of hall was built at Yanqingsi 延慶寺 in Ningbo in 1099 by the monks Jieran 介然 (d. ca. 1130), Huiguan 惠觀, Zhongzhang 仲章, and Zongyue 宗悅.<sup>53</sup> The Amitābha Treasure Pavilion at Jingzhusi, though not called a “hall for sixteen contemplations,” seems to have had a similar function, as well.<sup>54</sup> The hall at Yanqingsi was comprised of more than sixty bays (*jian* 間) with a central image of a “sixteen foot” Amitābha statue flanked by his attendants, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Around the central image were sixteen rooms that served as meditation chambers, where practitioners engaged in a three year commitment to the contemplation of Amitābha. This type of practice hall was so popular that one was even

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53. Takao, p. 113-114.

54. In general, this type of meditation hall seems to have preceded the regularization of nomenclature, so many halls that functioned as halls for sixteen visualizations actually used multiple names.

constructed in the imperial living quarters of the Palace. Another well-known example was built at Upper Tianzhusi 上天竺寺 temple in Hangzhou.<sup>55</sup>

Chōgen observed a hall of constant ambulation while on Tiantai, and, as explained below, must also have visited the hall for sixteen visualizations at Yanqingsi. The Pure Land halls he saw during his travels would eventually serve as prototypes for his own halls at the seven Tōdaiji *bessho* and on the Bizen estate. The practices Chōgen prescribed at his halls probably followed those widely used in Tiantai temples during the Southern Song, a possibility explored in subsequent sections. However, while Chōgen was interested in the Pure Land halls he saw at Tiantai temples, this interest never seems to have provoked a deeper investigation of Tiantai doctrine. Upon returning to Japan, Chōgen associated with some Tiantai clerics, but only for the purposes of building his network to facilitate the reconstruction of Tōdaiji. In his mind, apparently, Tiantai and Pure Land practice could largely be separated, and while many of Chōgen's ideas for Buddhist practice at his *bessho* were borrowed from the Pure Land halls in Chinese Tiantai temples, Chōgen avoided the introduction of Tiantai rituals or practice that did not involved Pure Land Buddhism.

Evidence that supports the conclusion that Chōgen visited Yanqingsi includes a painting he imported to Japan known as the *Transformation Painting of the Sixteen Visualizations of the Contemplation Sutra* (C. *Guanjing shiliuguan bianxiangtu* 觀經十六觀變相圖). This painting was a pictographic representation of the sixteen visualizations narrated in the *Contemplation Sutra* in vertical orientation that was originally used for meditation routines at a Chinese hall for sixteen visualizations. A record of this painting

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55. Takao, p. 113-114.

appears in the *Sazenshū*, in which Chōgen says he donated the painting to the Kōyasan shinbessho. The painting was later copied in Japan during the Kamakura Period at Chōkōji 長香寺 in Kyoto and Amidaji 阿弥陀寺 in Nara, where copies still exist (Figures 2 and 3).<sup>56</sup> This particular style of painting originates from a commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra*, the *Guan wuliangshoujing yishu* 觀無量壽經義疏,<sup>57</sup> by the Northern Song Tiantai/Pure Land/vinaya monk, Yuanzhao 元照 (1048–1116).<sup>58</sup>

The *jōroku* statues Chōgen created for the Pure Land halls at his bessho were modeled after the image of Amitābha in this Sixteen Contemplations painting. These Amitābha statues are distinctive when compared to other images of Amitābha from Japan during the same period. The main difference is the position of Amitābha's hands: in Chōgen's statues, Amitābha forms a mudra in which his left hand is raised before his breast, with the thumb and middle finger touching, while the right hand is suspended downwards (Figure 4).<sup>59</sup> This particular mudra is known as the “reversed mudra of Amitābha's descent” (*sakate no raigōin* 逆手来迎印),<sup>60</sup> since the hand positions are reversed when compared to statues of Amitābha's descent made in Japan previously, in which the left hand was suspended downwards and the right hand raised. The reversed mudra Amitābha makes in Chōgen's

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56. Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. (2006), nos. 140 and 141.

57. T37, n. 1752.

58. Taniguchi (2008), p. 54.

59. This can be seen with the Amitābha statue from Jōdoji. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 1, p. 174; and Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. (2006), no. 137.

60. Nakamura, p. 452. See Taniguchi (2008), p. 55.



Figure 2. *Sixteen Contemplations from the Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life Sutra*. 1 hanging scroll. Kamakura Period, 13th century. Chōkōji 長香寺, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 140, p. 196.





Figure 3. *Sixteen Contemplations from the Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life Sutra*. 1 hanging scroll. Kamakura Period, 13th century. Amidaji 阿弥陀寺, Nara. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 141, p. 197.

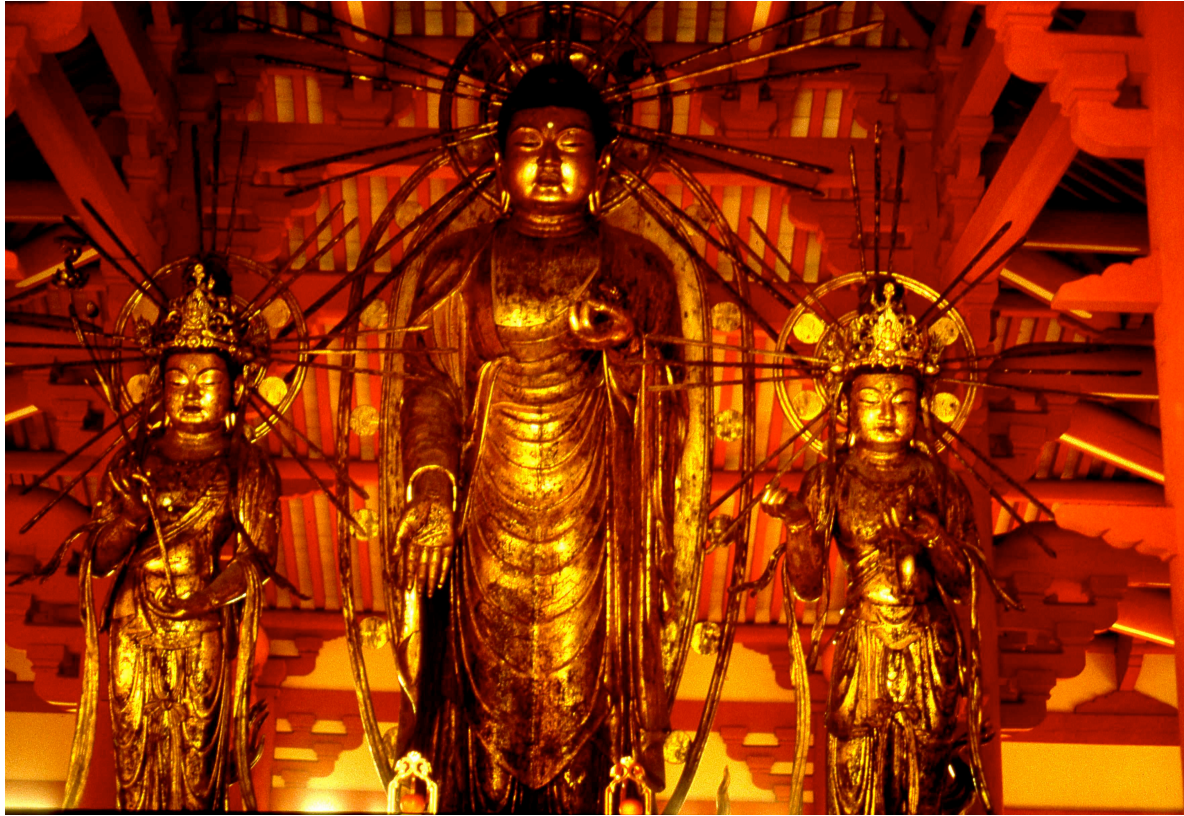


Figure 4. *Amitābha Triptych*. Kamakura Period, 1192. Jōdoji 浄土寺, Hyōgo Prefecture.



bessho statues derives from the thirteenth contemplation – the visualization of Amitābha and his two bodhisattva attendants – depicted in the *Transformation Painting of the Sixteen Visualizations of the Contemplation Sutra* Chōgen imported from China.<sup>61</sup> Images featuring Amitābha performing the reversed mudra gained currency during the Song and became popular in the Kamakura based on Song images (Figure 5),<sup>62</sup> of which the first recorded was imported by Chōgen.

This particular form of Amitābha can be seen today at the former Harima bessho, now named Jōdoji 浄土寺. The Jōdoji triptych was installed in 1192, and along with the reversed mudra, Amitābha is depicted with long fingernails, a characteristic typical of Song Buddhist sculpture. Also remaining are the head and one hand of Chōgen's Amitābha statue at the Pure Land hall on the Iga bessho (now Shindaibutsuji 新大仏寺, Figure 6).<sup>63</sup> The construction of the head of the Shindaibutsuji statue is very similar to the Jōdoji Amitābha statue, and the left hand makes the reversed mudra of Amitābha's descent while exhibiting the same long fingernails. Amitābha performing the reversed mudra can be seen in another Song painting of the Amitābha triptych now held by Saihōji 西方寺 in Aichi Prefecture, which may have been imported by Eisai in 1191, one year before the creation of the the Harima bessho Amitābha triptych.<sup>64</sup> The exact date of the importation of the Saihōji painting is uncertain,

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61. Taniguchi (2008), p. 56.

62. Nakamura, p. 452.

63. The head has been repurposed and is now attached to a seated statue at Shindaibutsuji, while the hand is held by the Sackler Museum at Harvard University. See *Daikanjin chōgen*, no. 105. Also see Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 2, p. 83.

64. Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan (2006), no. 138. Taniguchi (2008), p. 56.



Figure 5. *Amitābha Triptych* (only Amitābha featured). 1 hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty, 12th c., China. Shōjōke'in 清浄華院, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 137, p. 192.



Figure 6. *Left hand of Amitābha*. Kamakura Period, 13th century. Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 105, p. 158.

but if Eisai returned with that painting, then Chōgen's Amitābha triptychs could also have been modeled on Eisai's image, rather than the *Transformation Painting of the Sixteen Visualizations of the Contemplation Sutra* imported by Chōgen. Either way, Chōgen's Amitābha statues derived from images of Amitābha that in turn owed to Yuanzhao's commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra*, and which were probably originally installed in a hall for sixteen visualizations at a Tiantai temple. Returning to the original point, the fact that Chōgen brought the *Transformation Painting of the Sixteen Visualizations of the Contemplation Sutra* with him from China is evidence that he visited a hall for sixteen visualizations, and the most likely candidate was the hall at Yanqingsi, the most important Tiantai temple in Ningbo, where Chōgen was known to have traveled.

### **Song Pure Land societies as precedents for Chōgen's network**

Many types of lay Buddhist societies were formed during the Song, including confraternities entirely organized and supported by lay Buddhists. The activities of these organizations revolved around religious concepts such as the Field of Merit (*futian* 福田),<sup>65</sup> which extended to the donation and support of monasteries as well as “good works” projects such as road and bridge building that would later become associated with Chōgen. Other activities included providing tea or hot water for participants in religious festivals.<sup>66</sup> However, the increase in Pure Land confraternities from the Northern Song onwards, particularly in the Zhejiang and Jiangsu regions of southern China, was probably influenced

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65. Discussed in Chikusa, p. 270-271 and Michibata, p. 23-28. Also see Ter Haar, p. 24.

66. Ter Harr, p. 25-28.

by the activities of Buddhist institutions, particularly Tiantai Temples with Pure Land halls that invited local lay participation.<sup>67</sup> For example, Mao Ziyuan 茅子元 (d. 1096? - 1166?), founder of a popular “White Lotus Sect,” originally sought training in the Tiantai tradition before clashing with his teachers and forming his own group.

Variants of Pure Land societies founded by lay practitioners were preceded by Pure Land societies established by ordained monks. These institutionalized societies, while particularly significant within the Tiantai tradition, were not exclusive to a particular Buddhist denomination. For example, Yuanzhao's 元照 (1048-1116) disciple, Zongli 宗利, founded a Pure Land society at Daoweishan 道味山 connected with *vinaya* study (*C. lüzong* 律宗). Other such societies were affiliated with Chan 禪, for example Zongze's 宗頤 Excellent Lotus Society (*Lianhuashenghui* 蓮華勝會) at Changlusi 長蘆寺 in Zhenzhou 真州. The Southern Song lay Buddhist, Fengji 馮楫, also established a Chan-Pure Land society based in Suining 遂寧. In this way, Pure Land societies became a fixture of Buddhist institutions without regard for doctrinal orientation.<sup>68</sup>

The institutionalized, lay Pure Land societies that flourished during the Song Dynasty enjoyed the participation of hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of members. Some Song societies also bridged socio-economic divides, particularly Zhili's Pure Land group in Ningbo, which Chōgen would experience first-hand during his voyages to and from the port city. Such societies were portrayed as benefiting the country on the whole, though in some cases the actual breadth of the society is difficult to determine. Records of

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67. Stevenson, p. 342.

68. Takao, p. 110.

Shengchang's society are unique in that they quote actual membership lists, though these lists are limited to the society's elite participants. In any case, as discussed below, the bodhisattva vow to benefit all sentient beings seems to have been central to the message propagated by all of the major Pure Land societies during this period, indicating that the societies' founders envisioned their groups having a socially transformative impact.

In Japan, on the other hand, large-scale lay societies for Buddhist worship of any kind, including Pure Land worship, had little precedent before the time of Chōgen. The few Japanese lay Buddhist societies that did exist were small groups convened by intellectuals and minor aristocrats whose interests were confined to helping each other achieve rebirth in the Pure Land. The most well-known Japanese lay societies were those organized in the late 10th century by Yoshishige no Yasutane, the scholar also responsible for the earliest example of tales of rebirth literature in Japan, discussed above. Yasutane's first organization was known as the Society for Study and Endeavor (Kangakue 勧学絵), founded in 964, and consisted of Yasutane's friends and colleagues who shared similar interests in Buddhism. The society assembled twice each year for an entire day and night. On those occasions, the participants listened to sermons on the *Lotus Sutra*, composed Buddhist-themed poetry, and engaged in recitation of Amitābha's name (*J. nembutsu* 念仏) throughout the night. While the meetings were nominally for religious purposes, the occasion provided the opportunity for old friends to reunite and discuss recent events. This society lasted twenty years before eventually disbanding in 984. Two-years later, Yasutane collaborated with the Tendai monk Genshin to create another, more dedicated society for Pure Land practice known as the Nembutsu-*samādhi* Society of the Twenty-Five (Nijūgo zanmai'e 二十五三昧会). This society was also small, comprised of twenty-five Pure Land devotees from the bureaucratic

and monastic ranks. They met more frequently, once each month, to engage in the same activities scheduled by the Kangakue: lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* followed by a night-long *nembutsu* recitation. The members also pledged loyalty to one another in times of sickness or death in order to achieve their common goal of Pure Land rebirth. Genshin's *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集), written between 984 and 985, was probably intended as a manual for this society.<sup>69</sup> In particular, the second part of Genshin's text provides a detailed account of procedures for *nembutsu* practice in addition to outlining the appropriate care for the sick and dying in order to maximize their chance of rebirth in Amitābha's paradise.<sup>70</sup>

Compared with Yasutane's societies, the Pure Land network Chōgen would establish, centered around the Pure Land halls on the Tōdaiji *bessho*, shared more in common with the Pure Land societies of the Song. First, Song Pure Land societies were formed as a response to a recent catastrophe and/or to propagate Buddhism among the gentry and common people. For example, Shengchang's society was formed as a response to Later Zhou 後周 (951-960) Emperor Shizong's 世宗 (r. 954-959) persecution of Buddhism, as well as continuous challenges mounted by Confucians. Chōgen founded his Pure Land network after a similar disaster – the destruction of Buddhist temples in Nara during the Gempei War – and aimed to popularize Pure Land devotion as a means to encourage support for the rebuilding of Tōdaiji. Second, Song Pure Land societies were open to monastics and lay disciples, and encouraged a diverse membership. In order to ensure their societies' viability, the founders sought the

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69. Andrews, p. 38-39.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

support of the emperor and participation of high-ranking court officials. However, Zunshi and Zhili, in particular, also encouraged participation from the lower classes as part of their wider proselytization efforts.<sup>71</sup> In similar fashion, Chōgen reached out to the emperor and warrior families of Japan as pillars of support, while encouraging participation in his Pure Land network from the local populace on the Tōdaiji estates. Third, some Song Pure Land societies were spatial networks, geographically distributed across large regions. This was particularly true of Shengchang's society, which was based in Hangzhou, but included extensive membership from the capital in Bianjing and other urban areas. Zhili's society was so large that it probably covered a sizable geographic portion of China, as well. While Tōdaiji served as the hub of Chōgen's Pure Land activities, his geographically dispersed *bessho* acted as nodes that encouraged participation by provincial residents in rites performed in each of the *bessho*'s Pure Land halls. Fourth, Zhili's network, the only one whose organization is understood in detail, exhibited a two-tiered structure organized around monastic and lay practice that shared characteristics with Chōgen's inner and outer network.

Chōgen almost certainly witnessed the activities of some institutionalized Pure Land societies during his voyages to China, notably the society at Yanqingsi. The commonalities between Song Pure Land societies and the Pure Land network Chōgen would establish in Japan suggests that the Song societies formed a prototype Chōgen would emulate after he realized the possible benefits of such an organization when deployed for the rebuilding of Tōdaiji. The Song Pure Land societies also provide a glimpse into the types of religious rites

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71. The size of Zunshi's society has been debated, but I suggest below that the society was much larger than some scholars have imagined, and was central to his efforts to replace blood rituals with Buddhist rituals among the common classes.



that Chōgen might have borrowed from Zunshi and Zhili for implementation in his own Pure Land halls.

*Recruiting members: Shengchang's Purifying Practice Society*

Shengchang's Purifying Practice Society, based at Zhaoqingsi 昭慶寺 in Hangzhou, was the first major, institutionalized Pure Land society of the Song Dynasty.<sup>72</sup> Shengchang's society was formed in 991 during Taizong's reign and included many high-ranking officials from the imperial court.<sup>73</sup> There are no precise dates for the dissipation of the society, but it seems likely that the group gradually declined in the early years of the 11th century after Taizong's death. Several sources exist for the study of this society, including the *Complete Records of the Buddha and Patriarchs* (*Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀) by Zhipan 志磐 (active during Southern Song);<sup>74</sup> the *Wonjong mullyu* 圓宗文類,<sup>75</sup> compiled by Uicheon 義天 (1055-1101); the *Compilation on the Lotus Society of Zhaoqingsi on Hangzhou's West Lake* (*Hangzhou xihu zhaoqingsi jielianshe ji* 杭州西湖昭慶寺結連社集), with a preface by Qian Yi 錢易;<sup>76</sup> and several stele inscriptions, including the *Introduction to the Zhaoqingsi Devotional Society*

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72. Previously, devotional societies dedicated to the *Avatamsaka Sutra* also existed during the Tang that were significant in rebuilding Buddhism's influence in northern China following the An Lushan rebellion. These groups also impacted Silla 新羅 (Satō, p. 75-76).

73. Satō, p. 66.

74. T49, n. 2035

75. X58, n. 1015.

76. Qian Yi was an official from Xinzhou 信州. The document was not well known before 2001. The copy referenced here was obtained from South Korea, studied by Seijun Satō, and partially reprinted in Satō (2001), p. 108-124.

*Stele (Dasong hangzhou xihu zhaoqingsi jieshe beiming bingxu 大宋杭州西湖昭慶寺結社碑銘并序)* by Songbai 宋白 (936-1012).<sup>77</sup>

Shengchang was born during the reign of the Wuyue King Qian Hongchu – renowned for his creation of 84,000 reliquary towers modeled on King Aśoka’s – and just four years after the Buddhist persecution led by Emperor Shizong 世宗 (r. 954-959) of the Later Zhou 後周. Shizong ordered the elimination of all monasteries lacking name plaques conferred by the government and heavily regulated registrars of ordained monks. 3,336 of a total of 6,030 temples in the kingdom’s territory were shuttered, and bronze statues and other religious artifacts confiscated.<sup>78</sup> Shengchang’s hometown of Qiantang 錢唐, the capital of the Wuyue Kingdom, was relatively unaffected by the persecution, though the same cannot be said for adjacent regions.

Shengchang was particularly disturbed by continued Confucian attacks on Buddhism, and envisioned his society as a means to strengthen the religion’s social foundation. Shengchang’s reasons for founding the society in his own words are recorded on Zhiyuan’s 智圓 (976-1022) *Principal Epigraphy of the White Lotus Society of Qiantang (Guqiantang bailianshe zhubeiwen 故錢塘白蓮社主碑文)*:

Officials always turn to Buddhist disciples and say, “From the time this dynasty was established, officials and scholars have respected the ancient in

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77. Included in the *Wonjong mullyu*, X58, n. 1015, p. 563b20-564c8. Hereafter, this stele will be referenced as “*Society Stele*.” A fuller list of sources for Shengchang’s society is listed in Satō (2001), p. 65.

78. Ebrey, p. 76.

their writing.<sup>79</sup> [We] generally study Han Yu in order to cultivate our character.” However, what [these officials] mean is [that the government should] purge Buddhist disciples. Therefore, I follow<sup>80</sup> in the footsteps of Huiyuan, whose [example] guided<sup>81</sup> us to form this society. Always follow my instructions: proliferate the stele [that explain our purpose], heap the praise [upon our group], and honor the path of Buddhism in order to form close alliances [with those in power].<sup>82</sup> Where appropriate, take a thorny situation and find a new way around the walls and chasms – this is what I teach.

公每顧門人曰。國初以來。薦紳先生。宗古為文。大率學退之之為人。以擠排釋氏為意。故我假遠公之跡。詠以結社事。往往從我化。而叢碑委頌。稱道佛法。以為歸嚮之盟辭。適足以枳棘異涂墻塹。吾教矣。<sup>83</sup>

Shengchang alludes to the ongoing critiques Buddhists faced from officials whose training in the Confucian classics disposed them against other religions, Buddhism in particular. The danger of future persecutions like the one during the Latter Zhou was no doubt a constant worry. Shengchang aimed to create his Purifying Practice Society in the footsteps of

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79. This is a reference to the Classical Prose Movement (*Guwen yundong* 古文運動) of the Tang and Song, which emphasized that the Classics should serve as the primary references for all human activity, both private and governmental, since the Classics represented the earliest instantiation of ethical norms that shaped Chinese civilization. Members of the movement were strong critics of the parallel prose (*piantiwen* 駢體文) style of writing that became popular from the Han dynasty onwards. Buddhism and Daoism were also the target of their critiques, since these religions challenged many of the “orthodox” instructions and precedents established in the Classics. Han Yu was one of the movement’s most notable members (Zhen, p. viii).

80. Satō, p. 105 uses the character 暇 instead of 假. CBETA’s text uses the latter.

81. Satō, p. 105 has 詠 instead of 誄. CBETA’s text uses the latter.

82. In other words, advertise the society as much as possible.

83. X56, n. 949, p. 914a10780. Also see Satō, p. 105, though his reprinted version of the text has problems with alternative characters and some misplaced *kaeriten* 返り点. The final portion of the text is slightly unclear, but the meaning seems to be that Shengchang’s Buddhist disciples should navigate around the difficulties posed by the enemies of Buddhism in the civil service.

Huiyuan 慧遠 (334-416), who was generally acknowledged to have formed the first Pure Land society in China, composed primarily of scholar-officials. In this way, Shengchang hoped both to create a positive image of Buddhism as a force for social good, while at the same time to attract consequential officials and ministers who would vouch for the Buddhist establishment should unforeseen threats arise in the future.

Shengchang was partial to the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* (C. *Huayanjing* 華嚴經) after residing at a practice center, the Huayan daochang 華嚴道場 on Wutaishan, which was dedicated to the teachings of this text,<sup>84</sup> though the practical orientation of his society was influenced by Pure Land teachings. According to the *Fozu tongji*:

The *śramaṇa* Shengchang of the Zhaoqingsi [near] West Lake in Hangzhou, who drew his blood to copy (*cixue shu* 刺血書) the “Purifying Practice” chapter (*Jingxing pin* 淨行品) of the *Avataṃsaka Sutra*, formed a devotional society that cultivated the pure practices of the western direction. Prime Minister Wang Danwei 王旦為 was the leader. The Deputy Prime Minister Su Yijian 蘇易簡 as well as one hundred thirty-two people who were all scholars were known as disciples of the Purifying Practice Society. The monks who participated numbered in the thousands. Even Lushan’s 廬山 society could not match its fierce popularity.

杭州西湖昭慶寺沙門省常。刺血書華嚴淨行品。結社修西方淨業。宰相王旦為之首參政蘇易簡百三十二人。一時士夫皆稱淨行社弟子。比丘預者千眾人。謂廬山蓮社莫如此日之盛。<sup>85</sup>

One of Shengchang’s most acclaimed individual accomplishments was to copy the eleventh chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* on “Purifying Practice” in his own blood, a symbolic bodily sacrifice of the sort seen in Buddhist scripture – including the example of the Buddha’s

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84. Satō, p. 69-70.

85. *FZTJ*, p. 400c15.

disciple, Ananda, who divided his body equally into four parts in order to preempt conflict over the inheritance of his relics following his death; or the Bodhisattva All Beings Delight in Seeing (Yiqie zhongshen xijian pusa 一切眾生喜見菩薩), who set his body alight as an offering to the Buddha in the Medicine King Chapter (*Yaowang pusa benshi pin* 藥王菩薩本事品) of the *Lotus Sutra*.<sup>86</sup> For Shengchang's "sacrifice," he mixed his blood with ink, and after every character copied from the "Purifying Practice" chapter, he performed obeisance three times, circumambulated a Buddhist image, and thrice uttered the Buddha's name. Shengchang's achievement received so much acclaim that his manuscript was carved on woodblocks and printed one thousand times for distribution to both monks and laymen.<sup>87</sup>

Regular renewal of the bodhisattva vow would become a common practice among Song Pure Land societies, though the precise formulation of the vow could change. The "Purifying Practices" chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* provided the formulation of the bodhisattva vow used by Shengchang's society. In this particular chapter, Mañjuśrī explains the mindfulness that should be maintained by "householder bodhisattvas," or laypersons who have taken the bodhisattva vow to save all sentient beings:

Householder Bodhisattvas, should wish that all sentient beings; will know that the nature of the household is empty, and escape its pressures.

While filial to their parents, they should wish that all sentient beings; thoroughly serve the Buddha, and protect and nourish everyone.

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86. T9, n. 262, p. 53a23. Also see Benn (2007) for details about this type of practice in China.

87. Satō, p. 74.

When together with their spouses and children, they should wish that all sentient beings; treat enemies and intimates equally, forever removing attachment.

When fulfilling the five desires, they should wish that all sentient beings; extract the arrow of desire, and thoroughly realize calm tranquility.

When gathering for dance and music, they should wish that all sentient beings; take the *dharma* as their enjoyment, understanding that the entertainers are not real.

If in the palace rooms, they should wish that all sentient beings; enter into the bodhisattva grounds,<sup>88</sup> and forever remove polluted desires.

When wearing necklaces of precious stones, they should wish that all sentient beings; discard unreal adornments, and reach the abode of the real.

When ascending multistory pavilions, they should wish that all sentient beings; ascend the tower of the true *dharma*, and discern [the reality] of all things.

If they donate something, they should wish that all sentient beings; can discard all (their attachments), with minds free of strong bonds.

When gathering in a crowd, they should wish that all sentient beings, discard aggregate dharmas,<sup>89</sup> and attain the complete knowledge (of enlightenment).

If one is in danger, they should wish that all sentient beings, be free to follow their will; the places they go unhindered.

菩薩在家，	當願眾生：	知家性空，
免其逼迫。	孝事父母，	當願眾生：
善事於佛，	護養一切。	妻子集會，
當願眾生：	怨親平等，	永離貪著。
若得五欲，	當願眾生：	拔除欲箭，
究竟安隱。	妓樂聚會，	當願眾生：
以法自娛，	了妓非實。	若在宮室，

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88. I.e. the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of bodhisattva practice discussed in the sutra.

89. In other words, realize that everything we perceive through the senses are compound entities composed of the five aggregates, and therefore conventional, not real. The writer plays on the fact that “crowd” and “aggregate” here use the same character, *zhong* 眾.

當願眾生：	入於聖地，	永除穢欲。
著瓔珞時，	當願眾生：	捨諸偽飾，
到真實處。	上昇樓閣，	當願眾生：
昇正法樓，	徹見一切。	若有所施，
當願眾生：	一切能捨，	心無愛著。
眾會聚集，	當願眾生：	捨眾聚法，
成一切智。	若在厄難，	當願眾生：
隨意自在，	所行無礙。 <sup>90</sup>	

Each of these “wishes” or “vows” is intended to instill compassion (*karuṇā*) in the minds of lay Buddhist devotees, such that each moment is directed toward assisting others on their own paths to enlightenment. Worldly pleasures or mortal danger should not distract one from this task. Even filial piety, one of the virtues central to Confucian ethics, is problematic if devotion to one’s parents leads to an ignorance of the sufferings of beings extrinsic to the family. Mañjuśrī’s *gāthā* amounts to a list of applications of the bodhisattva vow to various situations, and no doubt served as an instructive tool for explaining the vow to Shengchang’s lay disciples. This accounts for Shengchang’s decision to popularize the text of the chapter by reproducing it in such an exceptional manner.

Some scholars have questioned the Pure Land orientation of Shengchang’s society, but there is ample evidence to place it in a similar category with other early Pure Land societies of the Song. Shengchang’s account of his organization, the *Records of the West Lake Pure Society* (*Xihu jingshelu* 西湖淨社錄), is no longer extant, however an outline of the objectives of his society, composed by Shengchang in the form of a personal vow, remains on Songbai’s *Society Stele*:

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90. T10, n. 279, p. 70a4-a18. Translation adapted from Cleary, p. 313-314. Also see Satō, p. 77-78.

I, along with eighty monks and one thousand lay disciples, beginning from today arouse the intention to achieve enlightenment, and through the whole of my future years, engage in bodhisattva practice. We vow to extinguish the effects of karma, and thereafter to be reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land (*Anyangguo* 安養國). [We vow] to swiftly enter the *dharmadhātu* (*fajie* 法界),<sup>91</sup> and attain perfect enlightenment without subsequent rebirth. [We vow] to practice the Ten *Pāramitās* and associate with numerous good and virtuous friends.<sup>92</sup> The aura from our bodies will shine forth and cause all sentient beings to attain the *samādhi* of mindfulness of the Buddha (*nianfo sanmei* 念佛三昧), just like Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Shizhi 勢至). [We vow] to hear the lamentations of the suffering and cause all sentient beings to attain the fourteen convictions in the dharma, just like Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin 觀音). [We vow] to cultivate the bodhisattva practices and vows that are as broad and limitless as the ocean, just like Samantabhadra (Puxian 普賢). [We vow] to open the gate of profound and deep Buddha-wisdom, just like Mañjuśrī (Miaode 妙德). [We vow] to strive for the fulfillment of wisdom, succeeding the place of the Buddha, just like Maitreya (Mile 彌勒). When we become Buddhas, we will appear as [transformation] bodies in [our transformation] lands like Amitābha. These eighty monks and one thousand disciples [in our society], one after another will receive the promise of future enlightenment (*shouji* 受記).<sup>93</sup> All will attain correct awakening. I now make this vow on behalf of all sentient beings. For them, whose numbers are inexhaustible, I vow as such.

我與八十比丘一千大眾。始從今日發菩提心。窮未來際行菩薩行。願盡此報已生安養國。頓入法界圓悟無生。修習十種波羅蜜。多親近無數真善知識。身光徧照令諸有情得念佛三昧如大勢至。聞聲救苦令諸有情獲十四無畏如觀世音。修廣大無邊行願海猶如普賢。開微妙甚深智慧門猶如妙德。邊際智滿次補佛處猶如彌勒。至成佛時若身若土如阿彌陀。八十比丘一千大眾轉次授記。皆成正覺。我今立此願普為諸眾生。眾生不可盡我願亦如是。<sup>94</sup>

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91. Here synonymous with the *dharmakāya*.

92. In other words, one who is able to advise on spiritual matters (*DDB*).

93. Conferred by the Buddha, as in the *Lotus Sutra*, where the Buddha confers the promise of enlightenment among increasingly unanticipated groups of people.

94. X58, n. 1015, p. 563c11-c20. Punctuation mine.



Shengchang's vow is consistent with the advice provided to householder Bodhisattvas in the "Purifying Practices" chapter of the *Avataṃsaka sūtra*, which provided the inspiration for the group's activities. Through bodhisattva practice, Shengchang says his society's members will attain the merits of Buddhas and bodhisattvas as described in well-known texts: the *samādhi* of mindfulness attained by Mahāsthāmaprāpta in the *Śūraṅgama sūtra* (*Dafoding shoulengyan jing* 大佛頂首楞嚴經),<sup>95</sup> the empathy exercised by Avalokiteśvara in the *Lotus Sutra*, the emphasis on action taught by Samantabhadra in the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* (*Ru fajie pin* 入法界品),<sup>96</sup> the capacity for wisdom associated with Mañjuśrī in *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, Maitreya's reputation as the Buddha's successor in the *Lalitavistara sūtra* (*Puyao jing* 普曜經), and the grace of Amitābha and his Pure Land mentioned in the *Pratyutpanna samādhi sūtra* (*Banzhou sanmeijing*) and the three Pure Land sutras.

While Shengchang's vow provides little detail about his society's concrete practices and how they planned to achieve their goals, there are plentiful clues that Pure Land practice was important. First, Shengchang mentions Amitābha both as the first and last deities in his list on the *Society Stele*, bookending the other Buddhas and bodhisattvas. On the stele, the first vow of the society disciples is to be reborn in Amitābha's paradise, and their last vow is to attain their own transformation bodies and lands when they achieve Buddhahood, following the example of Amitābha and his Pure Land of Sukhāvatī.

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95. T19, n. 945, p. 128a24.

96. This sutra, "Entering the Realm of Reality," is actually the final chapter of the *Avataṃsaka sutra* as translated by Buddhahadra in 420 CE, though it was also translated as a separate text by Prajñā in 798 CE under the title *Ru busiyi jietuo jingjie puxian xingyuan* 入不思議解脫境界普賢行願 (*DDB*).

Second, on the *Society Stele* Shengchang references the *samādhi* of mindfulness of the Buddha (*nianfo sanmei*) attained by Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Mahāsthāmaprāpta is said to attain this *samādhi*, a state of meditative absorption, in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*:

The *dharma* prince Mahāsthāmaprāpta, along with his company of twenty-five bodhisattvas, then arose from their seats, bowed their heads at the feet of the Buddha, and said to him: I recall that in a *kalpa* as distant in the past as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges, there was a Buddha who appeared in this world whose name was Amitābha (無量光).<sup>97</sup> [This] Tathāgata of Twelve [Kinds of Light]<sup>98</sup> remained for one *kalpa*, after which this Buddha was named “Surpassing the Light of the Sun and Moon.” This Buddha taught me the *samādhi* of mindfulness of the Buddha.

大勢至法王子。與其同倫五十二菩薩即從座起。頂禮佛足而白佛言。我憶往昔恒河沙劫。有佛出世名無量光。十二如來相繼一劫。其最後佛名超日月光。彼佛教我念佛三昧。<sup>99</sup>

The Buddha-mindfulness *samādhi* was also practiced by Huiyuan, who based his practice on the *pratyutapanna samādhi* (*banzhou sanmei*) discussed previously in the context of Tiantai Pure Land. The Tiantai monk Zhiyi later incorporated the Buddha-mindfulness *samādhi* into his four types of Tiantai meditation, in which it became a ninety-day circumambulation of a

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97. This name, literally “Infinite Light,” is given as an alternative name of Amitābha in the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life*: 「無量壽佛、號無量光佛、（中略）超日月光佛」 (FXDCD).

98. Amitābha is also known as the Buddha of Twelve Kinds of Light (Shier guang fo 十二光佛) in the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, which are given as “the Buddha of light that is immeasurable 無量光佛, boundless 無邊光佛, irresistible 無礙光佛, incomparable 無對光佛, *yama* (flaming) 燄王光佛, pure 清淨光佛, joy 歡喜光佛, wisdom 智慧光佛, uninterrupted 不斷光佛, difficult to conceive 難思光佛, ineffable 無稱光佛, surpassing sun and moon 超日月光佛” (DDB).

99. T19, n. 945, p. 128a21-a24.

statue of Amitābha while meditating on that Buddha's attributes.<sup>100</sup> The Buddha-mindfulness *samādhi* was also understood from the *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith* (*Gisillon so 起信論疏*) by Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686) as a practice in which one single-mindedly fixates on the appearance of the Buddha or repeats his name.<sup>101</sup> As such, the Buddha-mindfulness *samādhi* mentioned by Shengchang had a long history as a devotional exercise invoking Amitābha.

Third, the Tiantai monk, Zhiyuan, who hailed originally from Qiantang (Hangzhou) and retired on the shores of West Lake where Shengchang's society was formed, claims in his *Principle Stele Inscription for the White Lotus Society of Qiantang* that “The Buddha of Immeasurable Life (i.e. Amitābha) was highly regarded by this group, and therefore [a statue] was carved from sandalwood” (無量壽佛者，群生之仰止，乃刻旃檀). The term “White Lotus Society,” used in the stele title, generally referred to lay societies with ideals based on Huiyuan's original White Lotus Society on Lushan.<sup>102</sup> Since Zhiyuan was a local monk from Hangzhou and continued to reside there, his description of the Purifying Practices Society would seem credible. Other records, including Songbai's *Society Stele*, Qian Yan's 錢儼 (937-1003) “Poem on Joining the Society” (*Rusheshi 入社詩*), and the *Preface to the Zhaoqingsi Devotional Society Stele*, say that Shengchang carved a statue of Vairocana from sandalwood. The differences in these accounts have led to scholarly disagreement about the

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100. Getz, p. 491-492.

101. “念佛三昧.” *DDB*.

102. See Ter Harr, p. 28-43 for further information on the use of “White Lotus Society” in the early Song Dynasty.

identity of the central deity of worship for Shengchang's society, but there is no reason the accounts should necessarily be contradictory – given our understanding of the society and its practices, its members may have worshipped both images of Vairocana and Amitābha, with the latter used for Pure Land rituals.<sup>103</sup>

Fourth, many of Shengchang's society's members claimed that their group was descended from Huiyuan's Lushan White Lotus Society through references in their "Poems on Joining the Society." For example, Grand Master of Remonstrance Liang Ding's 梁鼎 poem reads:

The ocean of the pure Flower Garland (*huayan* 華嚴); the perfectly bright,  
unexcelled principle.  
Hard it is to search for a virtuous teacher; yet realization lies in the snap of a  
finger.  
The Buddha is truly the same in each speck of dust; from our views aims  
multiply.  
In spring the ten million flowers return ; the moon rises over shallow and deep  
waters.  
Zong and Lei<sup>104</sup> left their traces; now quiescent for a thousand years.  
I cherish the persons of the constant Way; who provide my encouragement.<sup>105</sup>

In this poem, Liang Ding references Huiyuan's society through two of his most famous disciples, Zong Bing 宗炳 and Lei Cizong 雷次宗. Liang describes Zong and Lei's activities as forgotten since the fifth century, but now revived by Shengchang's society, which aims to follow the path they tread centuries ago. Many other "Poems on Joining the Society"

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103. Satō, p. 81-82.

104. Zong Bing 宗炳 (375–443) and Lei Cizong 雷次宗 (386–448) were both lay Buddhist disciples of Huiyuan on Mt. Lu (*DDB*). Here the poet concatenates their names as "Zong Lei" 宗雷 to satisfy the strictures of poetic meter.

105. Text reprinted in Satō, p. 95.

make similar references to Huiyuan's group by referencing Lushan or Huiyuan's Lotus Society, as well.<sup>106</sup> Song Bai's *Society Stele* also compares the aims of Huiyuan's society to Shengchang's.<sup>107</sup> These references to Huiyuan's society by members of Shengchang's own group shows that Shengchang's lay disciples viewed their activities in the context of Huiyuan's legacy of Amitābha worship and Pure Land practice.

Shengchang's lay disciples worshipped Amitābha and performed Pure Land rituals as one facet of their larger commitment to the Buddhist faith. They certainly did not consider the goals of Pure Land practice and the "Purifying Practices" chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* to be in conflict. Rather, Shengchang's society appears to have exhibited an inclination for Pure Land practice, even while relying on the *Avatamsaka Sutra* in order to elucidate the meaning of the bodhisattva vow.<sup>108</sup>

Shengchang's Purifying Practices society from the Northern Song provides a model for understanding connections between lay Pure Land societies and high-ranking scholar-officials during a period of extensive imperial Buddhist patronage. Shengchang successfully

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106. See, for example, Satō, p. 93 and 101.

107. X58, n. 1015, p. 564a16.

108. Despite the size and reach of his society, Shengchang was not recognized as warranting a place within the Pure Land lineages developed by some Song Tiantai scholars. The influential Tiantai, Pure Land, and *vinaya* monk Yuanzhao 元照 (1048-1106), for instance, did not reference Shengchang in his Pure Land lineage, instead listing Yanshou 延壽 (904-975) and Zunshi 遵式 (964-1032), who were active around the same years. The latter two were Tiantai monks whereas Shengchang was not. On the other hand, one hundred fifty years later, Zongxiao 宗曉 and his successor, Zhipan 志磐, author of the *Fozu tongji*, both recognized Shengchang as a Pure Land patriarch. Their recognition seems to have been conferred based on the fact that Shengchang founded a large, lay Buddhist society that incorporated Pure Land practice, a characteristic that all the Pure Land patriarchs in the lineage shared (Satō, p. 84. Also see Mochizuki, p. 390).

cultivated numerous links with civil service officials, who formed the backbone of the society's membership. Satō Seijun identified a number of high-ranking officials and scholars in the society from a collection of "Poems on Joining the Society" in the *Xiangguo xianggong zhuxianren sheshi* 相國向公諸賢人社詩. Based on that source, the society's members included many scholars from the official Hanlin 翰林 academy; others who had passed the prestigious *jinshi* 進士 exam; officials from the Ministry of Works (*gongbu* 工部), the Ministry of War (*bingbu* 兵部), the Ministry of Revenue (*hubu* 戶部), and the Ministry of Punishments (*xingbu* 刑部); Grand Masters of Remonstrance (*jianyi dafu* 諫議大夫);<sup>109</sup> Chamberlains for Ceremonials (*taichang* 太常);<sup>110</sup> as well as local Zhejiang transportation and trade officials (*Zhejiang zhuan Yun shi* 浙江轉運使).<sup>111</sup> Sun He 孫何 (961-1004), in his *Account of the White Lotus Hall* (*Bailiantang ji* 白蓮堂記), says the society even included several prime ministers: Wang Dan 王旦 (957-1017), Xiang Minzhong 向敏中 (942-1020), Wang Chinruo 王欽若 (962-1025), Wang Sui 王隨 (fl. 1001-1045), and Chen Yaozuo 陳堯佐 (963-1044).<sup>112</sup>

The number of high-ranking officials who joined Shengchang's society was no accident. As described on the *Principal Epigraphy of the White Lotus Society of Qiantang*,

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109. "... whose principal function was to attend and advise the emperor, and especially to remonstrate with him about what they considered improper conduct or policy" (Hucker, p. 148).

110. "... in charge of great state sacrificial ceremonies, especially at the Imperial Ancestral Temple" (Hucker, p. 476).

111. Satō provides a complete list of title and names, as well as biographies of some officials. See Satō, p. 85-92.

112. See Huang, p. 300.

Shengchang set out to create a society that would propagate Buddhism among the ruling classes in order to insulate the religion from Confucian criticism. Judging from the fact that so many high-ranking civil servants from Bianjing, including successive prime ministers, elected to join Shengchang's society, his group almost certainly operated with the blessings of the emperor. Taizong likely advised his ministers to participate in Shengchang's society as part of his plan to incorporate Buddhism into his government's administration, as discussed above.

While Shengchang's Purifying Practice Society included many high-ranking scholar officials, Song Bai's *Society Stele* explains that persons from all social classes and backgrounds benefitted from Shengchang's teachings.

When scholars heard [his teachings], they became loyal and honest, and put a stop to corruption and greed. They adjusted the criminal codes and took pity on the common people. When novice monastics heard them, they diligently applied themselves to recitation, sincerely abstained from meat, practiced meditation on the *dharma*, and pursued the realization of suffering and emptiness. When officials heard them, they admired the virtue of benevolence, feared sinful karma, revered their superiors, and sheltered their families. When the common people heard them, they found delight in their toils, took pleasure in their meager circumstances, energetically performed their work, and feared the law. When virtuous persons heard them, they promoted the good. When evil persons heard them, they discarded their wicked ways. How could it be any different?

士人聞之。則務貞廉。息貪暴。填刑網。矜人民。釋子聞之。則勤課誦。謹齋戒。習禪諦悟苦空。職司聞之。則慕寬仁。畏罪業。尊長吏。庇家屬。眾庶聞之。則耳苦辛。樂貧賤。精伎業。懼憲章。善者聞之而遷善。惡者聞之而捨惡。夫何異哉。<sup>113</sup>

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113. X58, n. 1015, p. 563c22-564a02.

As seen from this text, Songbai, himself a scholar official, promoted Shengchang as an influential activist across the social landscape – an instructor of scholars, monks, officials, and common people. Since records allude to a membership of thousands of disciples, we can imagine that Shengchang’s society must have attracted people from different social classes. Even if Songbai’s writing embellished the reach of society among the common people, he was nevertheless eager to portray the society as having a transformative impact on society at large, which suggests that the ideal of benefiting the populace on the whole was considered important.

The social reach of Shengchang’s organization was also aided by its geographic distribution across the urban centers of China during the Northern Song. The *Jieshe beiyin* 結社碑陰 stele inscription<sup>114</sup> by Zhejiang Transportation Official Sun He 孫何 includes seventeen names of officials who wrote “Joining the Society” poems. Of these, just two were from Hangzhou. Others hailed from Yangzhou 揚州 (current day Jiangsu 江蘇 Province), and fourteen from the capital, Bianjing 汴京. Thus, the geographical influence of Shengchang’s society was not limited to southern China, but expanded over time to form a network with multiple nodes, including the capital.<sup>115</sup>

Shengchang’s society had faded long before Chōgen’s trips to China. However, his society shared much in common with later Pure Land societies, including Chōgen’s, in terms of the circumstances of its formation, as well as its goals, membership, and geographic

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114. Satō reprints this inscription from *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* 咸淳臨安志, fascicle 79, *Siguan* 寺觀 5, *Dazhaoqingsi* 大昭慶寺 page. This text is available digitally at <http://ctext.org>. See Satō, p. 103.

115. Satō, p. 103-104.



extent, suggesting its influence on later groups. In keeping with the sketchy details of Chōgen's travels in China, no sources attest to Chōgen's familiarity with Shengchang's society, but it seems likely that Chōgen visited Hangzhou, and thus may have learned of the society at Zhaoqingsi through the stele inscriptions there or conversations with local clergy in the region. The detailed records of Shengchang's society's membership also have ramifications for thinking about the Pure Land society that Chōgen encountered at Yanqingsi under another Song emperor and Buddhist patron, Xiaozong.

Because the details of Shengchang's society's Pure Land practices are unknown, to understand what Pure Land practices were like in institutionalized societies during the Song, we must turn to the later societies founded by Zunshi and Zhili.

#### *Repentance and vows: the practices of Zunshi*

The first Tiantai Pure Land society of the Song was founded by Zunshi 遵式 (964–1032) at Baoyunsi 寶雲寺 in 996 in the southeast district of Ningbo. Along with Zhili, Zunshi was credited by later Tiantai historians for reinvigorating the Tiantai tradition after successive persecutions at the end of the Tang and during the Ten Dynasties. Zunshi established a separate Pure Land hall for Amitābha worship at his temple, where the Buddha-mindfulness *samādhi* was practiced.<sup>116</sup> Much of what we know about his society derives from the preface to Zunshi's *Poems on the Buddha Mindfulness Samādhi* (*Nianfo sanmei shi* 念佛三昧詩), four poems in imitation of those by Wang Qiaozhi 王喬之, a disciple of Huiyuan's original Pure Land society. In his preface, Zunshi describes inviting “more than

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116. Stevenson, p. 359.

one hundred guests of noble aspiration” to Baoyunsi for a day and night in order to contemplate Amitābha.<sup>117</sup> Like Shengchang, Zunshi did receive support from numerous high-ranking officials, suggesting that some may have been persuaded to participate at the behest of Emperor Taizong. High-ranking bureaucrats that contributed to Zunshi’s organization included Qian Weiyan 錢惟演 (962-1034), the son of former King Qian Hongchu; Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1020), a scholar at the Academy of Scholarly Worthies (Jixian yuan 集賢院);<sup>118</sup> Zhang Dexiang 章得象 (978-1048), a scholar at the Hanlin Academy; and Hu Ze 胡則 (963-1039) and Li Zi (982-1036) 李諮, Hangzhou prefects.<sup>119</sup>

Zunshi was notable for his campaigns against popular religious rites that involved killing animals for blood sacrifices to local gods and ancestors. He attempted to supplant these rites with Buddhist veneration and repentance rituals that emphasized merit making in compliance with the precepts.<sup>120</sup> One half of the approximately sixty extant texts composed by Zunshi concern lay religious practices, including: ceremonies for feeding hungry ghosts

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117. T47, n. 1969A, p. 221b20-27. Translation by Getz (1999), p. 489, who provides a translation of the complete preface. Zunshi says that in addition to contemplating Amitābha, the guests “practiced the Han 漢 and Wei 魏 sutras,” which may refer to a set of texts translated during the Han and (Northern?) Wei Dynasties, though the exact reference is unclear. Getz (1999), footnote 47, p. 515 is also uncertain. Based on Zunshi’s preface’s description, some scholars have concluded that Zunshi’s society was composed entirely of local scholar-officials or dignitaries, some of whom may have already patronized the temple since its establishment by Zunshi’s Korean master, Uitung 義通 (927-988). Getz seems to take this position.

118. “... One of the Three Institutes constituting the Academy for the Veneration of Literature; staffed with Grand Academicians whose substantive posts were as Great Councilors and other prestigious literati-officials of the central government” (Hucker, p. 131).

119. Huang, p. 304.

120. Stevenson (1999), p. 341.

(*shishi egui* 施食餓鬼) and releasing life (*fangsheng* 放生); rituals for the Ullambana festival (*yulanpen* 盂蘭盆); repentance rites based on the Golden Light Sutra (*Jinguangming jin* 金光明經); and devotion to the Pure Land deities, Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara. Therefore, despite the reference to “one hundred guests” in Zunshi’s *Poems on the Buddha Mindfulness Samādhi*, it seems his society was motivated to educate the local populace around Ningbo – particularly the lower classes – about normative Buddhist ritual. If so, then Zunshi’s Pure Land society was surely much larger, appealing to a wide swath of society in and around Ningbo.

Zunshi’s society provides a window into Pure Land practice within the Tiantai establishment during the period. Zunshi was an active writer, producing several manuals on Pure Land ritual that were treated as authoritative by later practitioners. One such manual was the *Rite for Repentance and Vows for Rebirth in the Pure Land* (*Wangsheng jingtu chanyuan yi* 往生淨土懺願儀).<sup>121</sup> This manual was likely aimed for monastic readership since the practices it described involved rigorous asceticism. However, Zunshi produced another repentance manual primarily for his lay audience known as the *Two Teachings for Resolving Doubts and Establishing the Practice and Vow to be Reborn in the Pure Land* (*Wangsheng jingtu jueyi xingyuan ermen* 往生淨土決疑行願二門).<sup>122</sup> This text included two separate rituals. The first is the rite for veneration and repentance (*lichan fa* 禮懺法), which presented a curtailed version of the more involved procedures discussed in his earlier manual. The second, the ten moments of mindfulness (*shinian* 十念), is a morning ritual for reciting

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121. T47, n. 1984.

122. T47, n. 1968.

Amitābha's name and the bodhisattva vow. The latter ritual could also be used upon one's deathbed to solicit Amitābha's aid in achieving the Pure Land.<sup>123</sup>

Repentance rites were another area of emphasis by Zunshi. He composed a short repentance formula known as the *Text of Repentance and Vow for the Daily Nianfo* (*Meiri nianfo chanhui fayuan wen* 每日念佛懺悔發願文)<sup>124</sup> for lay disciples to repent past sins, pledge to be reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land, and vow to benefit all sentient beings. Just as Shengchang's society combined the bodhisattva vow with Pure Land worship, Zunzhi also combines the two in the form of this short repentance rite.<sup>125</sup>

Zunshi's society lasted for only six years, disbanding in 1002, when he departed Ningbo for retreat on Tiantaishan, but the society would leave a legacy for later institutionalized Pure Land societies in the city,<sup>126</sup> inspiring the society Zhili would found at Yanqingsi in 1013, just a decade later.

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123. Stevenson (1999), p. 361-362.

124. X57, n. 950, p. 5c22-6a10.

125. Getz (1999), p. 493 provides a translation of this vow. In addition to worshipping Amitābha, Zunshi's society also privileged Avalokiteśvara, part of Amitābha's retinue. The society engaged a local sculptor to fashion a sandalwood statue of Avalokiteśvara for the dharma hall of Baoyunsi. Dhāraṇī scrolls were inserted inside an interior cavity of the statue in order to empower the statue in accordance with the practices of the time (Stevenson, 1999), p. 345.

126. Getz (1994), p. 489.

### *Society organization under Zhili*

The most enduring of Song Pure Land societies was Zhili's society at Yanqingsi.<sup>127</sup> As mentioned above, Zhili became well-known in Japan through his exchange with the Japanese Tendai Pure Land patriarch, Genshin (942-1017), who sent his disciple Jakushō to Yanqingsi with a list of questions about Tiantai doctrine. The answers provided by Zhili and recorded in the *Records of the Teachings and Conduct of Zhili* (*Siming zunzhe jiaoxinglu* 四明尊者教行錄)<sup>128</sup> became a cornerstone of doctrinal understanding for the evolving Japanese Tendai school. Partially because of Zhili's distinction in Japan, Zhili's home temple of Yanqingsi became a pilgrimage destination for many Japanese monks who traveled to China during the Song.

Zhili's temple was located in Ningbo, known as "Siming" 四明 in Zhili's time and "Mingzhou" 明州 during Chōgen's visits. Both names derived from the Simingshan 四明山 mountain peak, part of the Tiantai mountain chain to the southwest of the city. Yanqingsi became the center of Tiantai activities in Ningbo under Zhili's direction. The temple was conveniently located near the pagoda and city symbol, Tianfengta 天封塔.<sup>129</sup>

Zhili's decision to found a Pure Land society occurred in the midst of a crisis for the Tiantai establishment. From the mid-10th century, a group of Tiantai monks, pejoratively labeled the "Off Mountain" (*shanwai* 山外) faction, published scores of tracts that argued for

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127. Yanqingsi was previously known as Baoensi 報恩寺. Zhili renovated the temple in 1009 and the new temple name was awarded by the court in 1010 (Chan, p. 416).

128. T46, n. 1937.

129. Taniguchi (2009), p. 11.

the primacy of the intrinsically pure and enlightened mind as the foundation for ultimate awakening. Their writings were heavily influenced by the Huayan School 華嚴宗 and particularly the *Awakening of Faith* (*Qixin lun* 起信論). Zhili believed this position was a misinterpretation of the commentaries composed by the previous Tiantai patriarchs, Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597) and Zhanran 湛然 (711–782), and sometimes described the Off Mountain writings as “heresies.” He argued that the deluded mind and the enlightened mind are mutually inclusive, and thus ignorant thoughts also provide a means to enlightenment. This became the official position of the “Home Mountain” (*shanjia* 山家) faction, as later named by Zhili’s disciples.<sup>130</sup> The debates between the two sides were heated, and threatened to divide the Tiantai school. One of the objectives behind the creation of Zhili’s Pure Land society was to encourage organizational stability by attracting a large base of lay followers who would provide support for his temple, and by extension, his stature within the Tiantai establishment. Like Shengchang’s Purifying Practices Society and Zunshi’s Pure Land group at Baoyunsi, Zhili’s society aimed to popularize Pure Land Buddhism as a response to either internal or external pressure on the religion.

The general structure of Zhili’s society is well-attested, unlike the societies founded by Shengchang and Zunshi. Zhili discussed his society’s structure in his *Announcement of the Gathering of the Nianfo Assembly* (*Jie nianfohui shu* 結念佛會疏)<sup>131</sup> written in 1012, just as it was being formed. Later, the monk Zongxiao 宗曉 (1151–1214) described the society’s

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130. For the details of the controversy and the philosophical positions taken by both sides, see Chan, p. 409–441.

131. Translated by Getz (1999), p. 494–496.

structure at the end of the 12th century in his *Records of the Teachings and Conduct of Zhili*. Zhili's original intentions for his society and Zongxiao's description almost two hundred years later show a remarkable degree of correspondence, showing the organization's stability across time. According to both documents, Zhili's society's monastic and lay members numbered approximately ten thousand. Within this structure, there were two hundred ten society leaders (*huishou* 會首) who formed the upper tier of the organization. The society leaders were each responsible for enrolling forty-eight additional members who were dedicated to following Amitābha's vow, yielding a total of 10,290 members.<sup>132</sup> This two-tiered organization seems to have replicated the structure of Buddhist societies during the Tang that met only once or twice a year, and were subdivided into smaller groups that met more frequently.<sup>133</sup> According to a local gazetteer published in 1228, the *Baoqing Era Siming Gazetteer* (*Baoqing siming zhi* 寶慶四明志), the number of households in the city of Ningbo totaled 41,067. If there were approximately 10,000 members in Zhili's Pure Land society, then approximately one quarter of the households in the city must have sent representatives to participate.<sup>134</sup> This, of course, assumes that all the members of the organization were based in Ningbo. As with Shengchang's society, we know this was not always the case. Zhili's society, too, may have originally been distributed across a larger geographical area encompassing other portions of southern or even northern China. In any case, such a large

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132. Ide (2001) says there were 10,080 members in total, but this would only account for the members enrolled by the assembly heads ( $210 \times 48 = 10,080$ ). Adding the assembly heads to the equation yields  $((210 \times 48) + 210) = 10,290$ .

133. Getz (1999), p. 497. Also see Suzuki, p. 215-219.

134. Ide (2001), p. 40-41.

membership figure probably points to participation across social divides, with the forty-eight society leaders representing local gentry and each leader's sub-group composed of participants from the general population.

According to both Zhili and Zongxiao's documents, the number of members in the organization was fixed, and thus for a new member to be added, an old member would first have to pass away.<sup>135</sup> If a member died, the society heads were expected to report the death. In order to ensure that the deceased would be reborn in the Pure Land, the other society members would recite the name of the Buddha one thousand times, perform repentance for the sins of the deceased, and carry out supplemental practice of Amitābha's vow.<sup>136</sup> Zhili's *Announcement of the Formation of the Nianfo Assembly* also mentions that the merit generated by the society would increase the longevity of the emperor, which may indicate that Taizong was a patron of Zhili's society, as he was for Shengchang's.

During Zhili's Amitābha recitation ordination ceremonies (*Nianfo shijie hui* 念佛施戒會), each member of the society was given a calendrical chart known as a *Calendar Exhorting Buddha-Recitation, Repentance, and Vow* (*Qing nianfo chanyuan lizi* 請念佛懺願歷子), a record-keeping method for chanting Amitābha's name introduced during this period

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135. Getz (1999), p. 494-496 and Ide (2001), p. 40-41.

136. Getz (1999), p. 495.



that would become widespread in later Chinese Pure Land societies.<sup>137</sup> Each day, members were expected to mark the number of recitations of Amitābha's name they performed at home, measured in quantities of one thousand recitations. Although these charts are no longer extant, each chart was thought to record a maximum of 360,000 recitations (1000 recitations x 360 days), and thus consist of 360 circles. The six characters of Amitābha's name or a picture of Amitābha and his accompanying bodhisattvas probably formed the central image on the charts.<sup>138</sup> For the society's communal meeting on the memorial day of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* (the fifteenth day of the second month), a large ceremony was held at Yanqingsi for all of the society's members. Each society leader would collect the calendrical charts from their sub-group's members in order to confirm their diligence in reciting the *nianfo*. According to the *Announcement of the Gathering*, a donation of forty-eight coins was also due at this time.<sup>139</sup>

Since Zongxiao affirms that Zhili's society was still flourishing at Yanqingsi as the most prominent lay Buddhist society in Ningbo during the time Chōgen disembarked at the port city, it seems likely that Chōgen came into contact with Zhili's society. As we will see in

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137. Other examples of such calendars include one used by the niece of the Qincheng 欽成 Empress (1052-1102), Zhu Ruyi 朱如一, who printed and distributed large character repetition books (*boke loushu* 擘窠婁書) as a means to encourage recitation of the *nianfo* 100,000 times. She attracted more than 200,000 participants for this effort (*Lebang wenlei* 樂邦文類, vol. 3; see Takao, p. 108). The Mingzhou instructor (xueyu 學諭) Jiu Dingguo 咎定國 also printed a large character *nianfo* chart (*boke nianfotu* 擘窠念佛圖) in order to encourage *nianfo* practice. According to a biographical account, the Siming iron worker Ji Gong 計公 completed seventeen of these charts over the course of three years, implying that he recited Amitābha's name 6,120,000 times during this period.

138. Takao, p. 108-109. Charts used by the Jōdo shinshū school of Pure Land Buddhism follow this structure, and could be related to the use of Song *nianfo* calendars.

139. Getz (1999), p. 495

subsequent chapters, there are structural connections between Zhili's society and Chōgen's Pure Land network dispersed across his *bessho*.

Concerning the practices of Zhili's society at Yanqingsi, Zhili promoted repentance practice and the daily renewal of the bodhisattva vow for his society's members in addition to recitation of Amitābha's name. The textual basis for his repentance practice is uncertain, but was probably similar to the formulations for short repentance rites and renewal of the bodhisattva vow composed by Zunshi for lay devotees at his Baoyunsi society. After all, Zunshi had been Zhili's disciple and the society he founded only preceded Zhili's by a couple of decades in Ningbo. Thus, Chōgen may have incorporated repentance rites and renewal of the bodhisattva vow at his Pure Land halls in addition to the recorded instances of Amitābha recitation practice. The texts Chōgen used for these purposes may also have derived from those Chōgen saw in use at Yanqingsi, establishing a ritual link between Zunshi, Zhili, and Chōgen.

Based on Zongxiao's record, Zhili's society enjoyed a remarkable degree of stability through the end of the 12th century. Afterwards, it is thought that the society continued to exist for some time. Many other Pure Land societies were formed in south China following Zunshi and Zhili, though none seem to have had the longevity of the society at Yanqingsi. Other societies that formed in Hangzhou, Ningbo, or the environs between the foundation of the Yanqingsi society and Chōgen's visits to China include (founder, society, temple or location, city, year): (1) Congya 從雅,<sup>140</sup> ?, Jingzhusi 淨住寺, Hangzhou, 1086; (2) Huiheng

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140. For Congya's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 212a09-a29.

慧亨<sup>141</sup> and Guo Miaoyuan 郭妙圓,<sup>142</sup> Xinianhui 繫念會, Yanshousi 延壽寺, Hangzhou, ?; (3) Fazong 法宗<sup>143</sup>, ?, ?, Hangzhou, before 1117; (4) Wangzhong 王衷,<sup>144</sup> Bailianshe 白蓮社, West Lake 西湖, Hangzhou, ca. 1111-1117; (6) Sizhao 思照,<sup>145</sup> ?, Deyun'an 德雲菴, Hangzhou, before 1119; (7) Ruoyu 若愚,<sup>146</sup> ?, Juehaisi 覺海寺, Hangzhou, before 1126; (8) Daochen 道琛,<sup>147</sup> Jingtú xiniānhuì 淨土繫念會, Yanqingsi 延慶寺, Ningbo, 1142; (9) Shiyóu 師友,<sup>148</sup> Xizishe 西資社, West Lake, Hangzhou, 1163.<sup>149</sup> Thus, Chōgen had other opportunities to familiarize himself with institutionalized Pure Land worship at different temples across south China in addition to Yanqingsi, particularly if he also traveled to the Southern Song capital of Hangzhou.

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141. For Huiheng's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 279a25-b4.

142. For Guo Miaoyuan's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 288a12.

143. For Fazong's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 279b28-c2.

144. For Wangzhong's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 283b23-27.

145. For Sizhao's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 221c27-222a11.

146. For Ruoyu's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 212c19-213a2.

147. For Daochen's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 230c9-231a20.

148. For Shiyóu's biography, see *FZTJ*, p. 179a21-b14.

149. Getz (1999), p. 510-511, provides a chart with this information in romanization; I have corrected a few of the citations in the *FZTJ*.

## Ningbo painting and the structure of the society at Yanqingsi

Further evidence about the structure of the Pure Land society at Yanqingsi and perhaps similar institutional organizations in Hangzhou has been uncovered in the study of Chinese paintings transmitted to Japan in great quantities from the Southern Song through the Yuan. In terms of Buddhist painting, Ningbo rivaled Hangzhou in production, partially because of the size of the lay organization based at Yanqingsi, which created a high demand for Buddhist art. By using inscriptions on paintings indicating a Ningbo provenance, Kitazawa Natsuki 北澤菜月, Ide Seinosuke 井手誠之輔, and others have published extensively on the category of “Ningbo Painting,” which primarily comprises paintings of Buddhas and bodhisattvas as icons for worship, but also includes paintings of the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, the *arhats*, the Ten Hell Kings, and portraits of patriarchs of Buddhist lineages.<sup>150</sup> Not all of the extant, verified examples of Ningbo Painting were used by the Yanqingsi Pure Land society;<sup>151</sup> some may have been used in local Liberation Rites for Water and Land (*Fajie sheng fan shuilu pudu dazhai sheng hui* 法界聖凡水陸普度大齋勝會) or in rituals for other religious groups in southern China. However, many of the works in the

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150. Ide (2008), p. 15. The idea of Ningbo painting as a distinct category was developed by Japanese scholars in the 1960s. While many of the subjects of Ningbo painting are theatrically portrayed, including *arhats* and Hell Kings, we will focus primarily on the more reserved styles used to depict Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

151. The field of Ningbo painting is complicated by the fact that many works attributed to Ningbo painters such as Lu Xinzong or Zhang Sigong until the 20th century were in fact Goryeo works that found their way into Japanese collections during the depredations of Japanese pirates, the peninsular invasion by Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536-1598), or the period of Japanese colonization (Lippit, 2008, p. 194-199). For the purposes of this dissertation, I follow Ide Seinosuke’s identifications of works that belong to the category of Ningbo painting (Ide, 1992, 2001, and 2008), focusing particularly on those of relevance to Yanqingsi. Many of the Buddhist painters in this category later became models for Buddhist painting in Japan during the first half of the 14th century (Kitazawa, p. 251).

Ningbo Painting category deal with overtly Pure Land themes, and since the ateliers of the Ningbo painters were within walking distance of Yanqingsi, and the Pure Land society there comprised such a large percentage of the population of the city, we can hypothesize that much of the oeuvre of Ningbo painters was originally produced for Yanqingsi and its Pure Land monastic and lay devotees.

One such example is a *parinirvāṇa* painting<sup>152</sup> by Lu Xinzong 陸信忠 (Figure 7) that provides an interesting twist on the usual subject matter. As in other *parinirvāṇa* paintings, Śākyamuni lies prone on a jeweled dais, while his ten major disciples grieve his death in the background. According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Niepan jing* 涅槃經), at the place of Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa* were twin Sala trees (*C. shaluo shuangshu* 沙羅雙樹), which produced white blossoms at the time of the Buddha's passing. Typically, the *parinirvāṇa* painting tradition follows this text by portraying the Sala trees behind the dais. However, in this particular painting, the two Sala trees are replaced by the seven-layered, jeweled trees that are described as features of Amitābha's Pure Land in the *Contemplation Sutra* and other Pure Land texts. The substitution of the Sala trees for the jeweled trees of Amitābha's Pure Land shows the penetration of Pure Land thought and practice into the rituals not usually associated with Pure Land doctrine. This particular painting was probably used at the meeting of the *nianfo* society at Yanqingsi to commemorate the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* on the twenty-fifth day of the second month.<sup>153</sup>

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152. See Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan (2009), no. 67.

153. Ide (1992). Also see Taniguchi (2009), p. 12.



Figure 7. *Nirvana of the Buddha*. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty (13th c.). Nara National Museum. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 67, p. 74.

The painting inscriptions on works in the Ningbo Painting category identify the city by different names depending on the era in which the work was produced, and also include the location of the atelier and the name of the artist. Some of the inscriptions identified on Ningbo Buddhist paintings are (artist, atelier location, city name, dynasty): Jin Dashou, west of the cart bridge, Mingzhou, Great Song 大宋明州車橋西金大受; the artisan Jin, cart bridge, Mingzhou, Great Song 大宋明州車橋金處士;<sup>154</sup> Lu Xinzong, stone-paved lane near cart bridge, Qingyuanfu 慶元府車橋石板巷陸信忠; Zhao Qiong, salty pool, Siming 四明口 (鹹) 塘趙璠, Zhou Silang, lower river, Mingzhou 明州江下周四郎; Zhang Sixun, Qingyuanfu, Great Song 大宋慶元府張思訓; Zhao Ninghua, Siming 四明趙寧華; and Puyue, Siming 四明普悅. Before the Tang, Ningbo was designated as part of Yuezhou 越州, and later gained administrative independence under the name “Mingzhou” 明州. Subsequently, it became known as “Qingyuanfu” 慶元府 from 1196 through 1277. Many of the inscriptions reflect the changes in the name of the city over this period. Some refer to specific places: for example “stone paved lane” (Shibanxiang 石板巷)<sup>155</sup> was on the southeastern side of the city, while “salty pool road” (Xiantangjie 鹹塘街) was in the northeastern side.<sup>156</sup> The artists’ ateliers were only about a fifteen minute walk from Yanqingsi.<sup>157</sup> Incidentally, their ateliers were also close to the Lingqiao Gate 靈橋門 and

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154. “Chushi” has been taken by scholars to be a given name, but here probably refers to the profession of an artisan or carver.

155. This street name remains today.

156. Kitazawa, p. 251.

157. Ide (2001), p. 39.

customs offices used to administer trade (*shibowu* 市舶務), both of which would have been used by arriving or departing Japanese monks.

Apart from Puyue, who was a monk, the extant Ningbo Buddhist paintings were all produced by laymen. Based on the names used for Ningbo on the paintings' inscriptions, tentative dates have been ascribed to the periods each painter was active: Puyue in the late twelfth century, the artisan Jin prior to 1194, Zhang Sixun and Lu Xinzong during the eighty year period between 1194 and 1277, and Zhao Qiong during the late twelfth century. Shou Silang uses the old name of "Mingzhou" for Ningbo, though he is nevertheless thought to have lived in the late Song and possibly into the Yuan, since his signature omits the period designation "Great Song."<sup>158</sup> Zhao Ninghua and Lu Zhongyuan also omit both the name of the dynasty and the location of their ateliers within Ningbo, suggesting that they were active around the same time.<sup>159</sup>

Based on the types of Buddhist paintings in the Ningbo category, many of which were likely produced for Yanqingsi, the network of devotees connected with the Tiantai Pure Land society at the temple can be divided into two levels that includes monastics and laymen. As identified by Ide, the "inner network" was comprised of monks who interpreted Pure Land practice in the context of Tiantai doctrine, in which Amitābha's paradise is treated as undifferentiated from our world of human existence. Members of the inner network engaged in Pure Land meditation at the temple's hall of sixteen visualizations not for rebirth in an

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158. Following the Mongol conquest and establishment of the Yuan Dynasty, using the period designation "Great Song" on an inscription would have been considered an act of insubordination.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 37-38.



other realm, but as a means to attain enlightenment in this existence. The “outer network,” on the other hand, was composed of the 10,080 members enrolled by Yanqingsi’s society leaders from the common population of the city. Members of the outer network were primarily lay followers whose rudimentary grip on Buddhist philosophy led them to conceive of the Pure Land as a distinct location. They practiced the *nianfo* 念佛 recitation of Amitābha’s name with the goal to be reborn in his abode upon their deaths. Since the identities of the forty-eight society leaders are unknown, it is difficult to say if they played a multiplicity of roles within the structure of the network, but by enrolling laymen in the organization, they served as intermediaries between the inner network of the temple’s monks and the outer network of lay followers.<sup>160</sup>

The Ningbo Buddhist painters created different styles of artwork to fit the needs of each tier of the Tiantai Pure Land network at Yanqingsi. Because the focus of members of the inner network lay upon doctrinal studies and rigorous meditation practice within the hall for sixteen visualizations, the paintings commissioned by the inner network were primarily devotional objects for their practice, with precise attention to the attributes of Amitābha and the other deities depicted. For the outer network, the Ningbo painters produced works for everyday lay practice with strong local flavors that appealed to their consumers, and which reflected the more diffuse set of deities worshipped by the common population.

Puyue, who was both a painter and a monk, created works for the inner network’s ritual calendar at Yanqingsi. He was a natural choice, since it was desirable to employ ordained artists who possessed the technical knowledge to depict the attributes of deities

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160. *Ibid.*, p. 40-41.

accurately. Puyue's paintings also demonstrate an extensive knowledge of pigment combinations and refined technique. His style mirrors the painter Sijing 思淨 of Hangzhou, who specialized in depictions of Amitābha; his *Amitābha Tathāgata* (*Emituo rulai xiang* 阿彌陀如來像) (Figure 8) now resides at 金蓮寺 Konrenji in Kyōto. Puyue's paintings also share much in common with the anonymously produced *Thousand armed, thousand eyed Avalokiteśvara* (*Qianshou qianyan guanyin xiang* 千手千眼觀音像) now at 永保寺 Eihōji in Gifu. Both of these paintings were probably produced in connection with the Tiantai community at Upper Tianzhusi in Hangzhou, which had its own hall for sixteen visualizations.

In Puyue's *Amitābha triptych* (*Emituo sanzun xiang* 阿彌陀三尊像) (Figure 9),<sup>161</sup> the colors are noticeably lighter and the ink lines more reserved than the popular paintings produced for lay devotees in the Yanqingsi outer network. Puyue's application of subtly varying pigments creates a stereoscopic impression behind the image of Amitābha, suggesting the presence of an ethereal, boat-shaped *mandorla* (*J. funagata kōhai* 舟形光背) surrounding the entirety of Amitābha's body and those of his attendant bodhisattvas. The artist's ability to wield diffuse washes of pigments, giving his work a "wet" impression, was consistent with Southern Chinese ink landscape painting of the period.<sup>162</sup> Puyue also applied thicker pigments to portions of the reverse side of his paintings in order to intensify the perception of color from the front (*J. urazaishiki* 裏彩色). With light washes and modulating lines and colors, Puyue expresses an image of Amitābha that can be envisioned in detail in

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161. See *Seichi ninpō*, no. 56.

162. Ide (2001), p. 50.



Figure 8. *Amitābha Buddha*. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty (13th c.). Nara National Museum. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 60, p. 67.

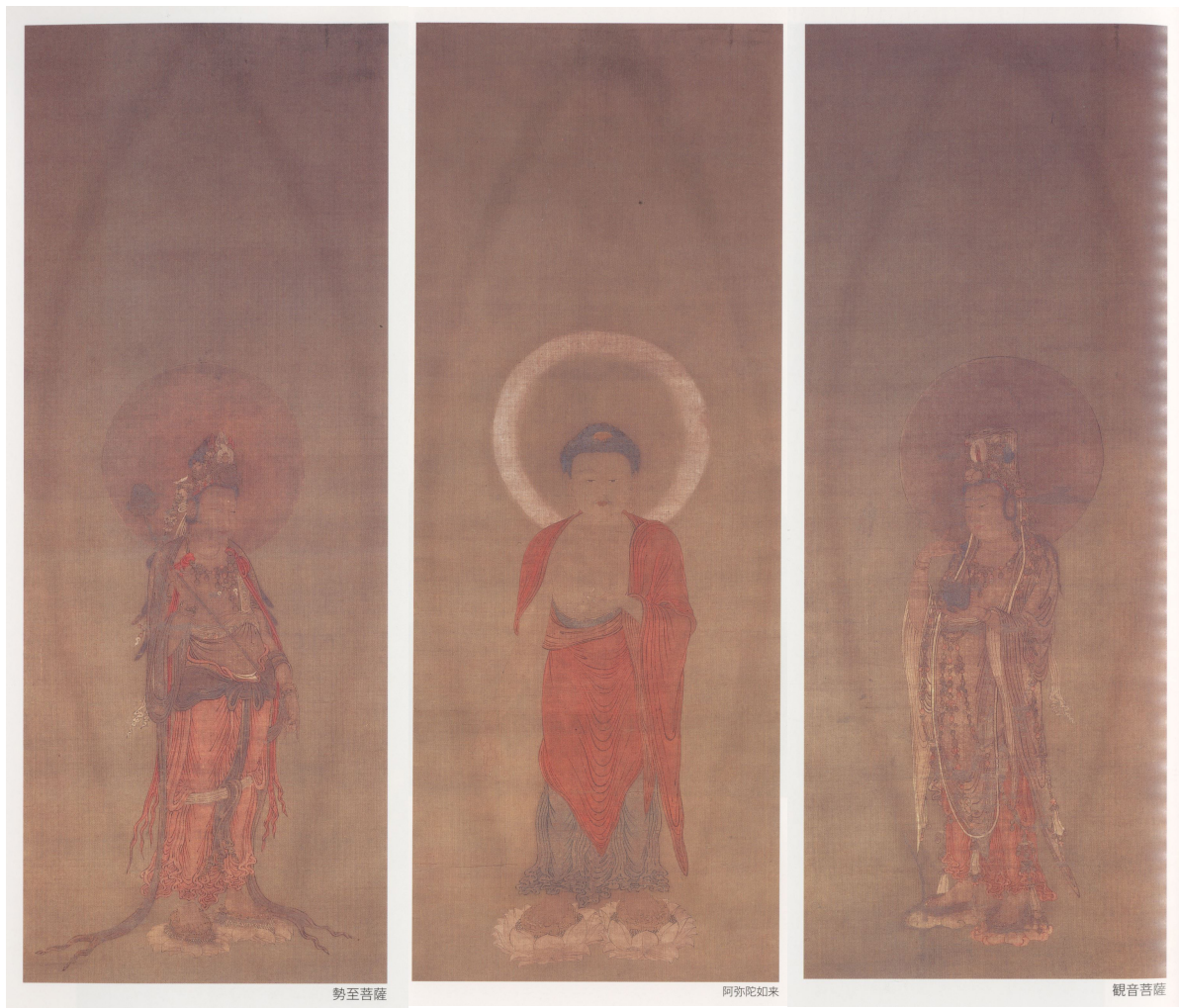


Figure 9. *Amitābha Triptych*. Three hanging scrolls. Southern Song Dynasty (12th-13th c.). Shōjōkein 清浄華院, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 56, p. 62-63.

the mind of the meditation practitioner, who aims to realize the coextension of Amitābha's Pure Land and this world. For the Yanqingsi hall of sixteen visualizations, such Amitābha triptychs would have been installed in each of the sixteen meditation rooms.<sup>163</sup> The anonymous painting, *Amitābha's Pure Land* (*Emituo jingtu tu* 阿彌陀淨土圖) (Figure 10), dated to 1183 and now stored at Chionji 知恩寺 in Kyōto is another example of an Amitābha triptych thought to have been created for such a purpose.<sup>164</sup>

The majority of the extant Buddhist paintings by Ningbo artists appear to have been produced for the Yanqingsi outer network. These included paintings with a Pure Land emphasis as well as other subjects, such as *Tiantai Great Master* (*Tiantai dashi xiang* 天台大師像) by Zhang Sixun (Saikyōji 西教寺 in Shiga) (Figure 11), *Assembly of Three Buddhas and Various Dieties* (*Sanfo zhuzun jihui tu* 三佛諸尊集會圖) (Figure 12) by Zhao Qiong 趙璚 (Manganji 滿願寺 in Kyoto), and a remaining scroll from a series of the *Sixteen Arhats* (*Shiliu luohan tu* 十六羅漢圖) (Figure 13) by Jin Dashou 金大受 (Museum of Modern Art, Gunma).<sup>165</sup> Paintings for the outer network tended to provide a Tiantai or Pure Land gloss to popular Buddhist concepts. For example, in the *Nandimitrāvādāna* (*Fazhuji* 法住記) the sixteen arhats, the direct disciples of the Buddha, through, are said to have remained in this world, foregoing their own *parinirvāṇa*, in order to protect the True Law (*zhengfa* 正法), which in Tiantai was thought to be embodied by the *Lotus Sutra*, the central text of Tiantai doctrine. Jin Dashou's series of the *Sixteen Arhats* would have probably been presented

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163. *Ibid.*

164. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

165. *Ibid.*, p. 42, provides a longer list of paintings, artists, and current locations.





Figure 10. *Pure Land Paradise of Amitābha*. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty (1180). Chion'in 知恩院, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 57, p. 64.



Figure 11. *Tendai Great Master*. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty (13th c.) Saikyōji 西教寺, Shiga. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 52 p. 58.





Figure 12. *Assembly of Three Buddhas and Various Deities*. Zhao Qiong 趙璠. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty. Manganji 滿願寺, Kyoto. Reprinted from Ide (2001), no. 10.





Figure 13. One scroll from series, *Sixteen Arhats*. Jin Dashou 金大受. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty. Museum of Modern Art, Gunma. Reprinted from Ide (2001), no. 50.

within that Tiantai doctrinal context. As mentioned before, Lu Xinzhong's representative work, the *Buddha's Parinirvāṇa* (*Fo niepan tu* 佛涅槃圖), replaced the twin Sala trees behind the Buddha's dais with the seven-tiered, jeweled trees of Amitābha's Pure Land. Also distinctive in Lu Xingzhong's painting, as well as another by Zhou Silang 周四郎 (Figure 14), is the manner in which Śākyamuni seems to prop up his body with his right hand rather than lying prone on the jeweled platform, as well as the inclusion of Amitābha and his Pure Land retinue descending from the clouds. These elements, taken together, suggest that Śākyamuni's death was not final, while connecting his *parinirvāṇa* scene with Pure Land worship in a way that is unsupported by canonical texts. This hodgepodge of elements may have been too unmethodical for the inner network of monks at Yanqingsi, but provided the outer network of lay devotees a sense of the interconnectedness of Buddhist soteriology while simultaneously privileging Amitābha worship. Such examples of popular Buddhist art produced by Ningbo painters was likely commissioned for the wealthy Pure Land devotees of Yanqingsi, who built private chapels or family temples for which they needed to procure Buddhist art as objects of devotion. These patrons may have even included some of the forty-eight society leaders of the temple's Pure Land network.<sup>166</sup>

Other Ningbo painters produced works both for the inner and outer networks. Zhang Sigong is the chief representative of this type of painter among extant works. His name appears on inscriptions for *Amogavajra* (*Bukong sanzang xiang* 不空三藏像) (Figure 15) now at Kōzanji 高山寺, *Descent of the Amitābha Triad* (*Emituo sanzun laiying* 阿彌陀三尊來迎) (Figure 16) at the Eikandō 永觀堂 (also known as Zenrinji 禪林寺), as well as

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166. Ide (2001), p. 49-50.



Figure 14. *Nirvana of the Buddha*. Zhou Silang 周四郎. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty. Nakanobōji 中之坊寺, Aichi. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 68, p. 75.





Figure 15. *Amogavajra*. Attributed to Zhang Sigong 張思恭. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty. Kōzanji 高山寺, Kyoto. Reprinted from Ide (2001), no. 64.





Figure 16. *Amitābha Triad*. Zhang Sigong 張思恭. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty. Zenrinji 禅林寺, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 59, p. 66.

*Amitābha Triptych* (*Emituo sanzun xiang* 阿彌陀三尊像) (Figure 17) at Rozanji 廬山寺,<sup>167</sup> all temples in Kyōto. The mudras formed by Amitābha in the Zenrinji and Rozanji paintings provide clues as to the intended audience. In the Zenrinji painting, Amitābha makes the reverse *raigō* mudra, indicating his descent to this world upon the death of a devotee in order to bring the deceased back to his Pure Land where he or she will be reborn. On the other hand, in the Rozanji painting Amitābha makes the teaching mudra, symbolizing the preaching of the Buddhist dharma. The Zenrinji painting was probably produced for the outer network, since the concept of “Amitābha’s descent” is connected with the popular practice of reciting the Buddha’s name in order to achieve rebirth in Amitābha’s Pure Land. The Rozanji painting, on the other hand, was likely produced for the inner network of practitioners who sought enlightenment through the Buddha’s instruction.<sup>168</sup> The structure of the two-tiered Pure Land network substantiated by extant Ningbo Buddhist paintings from the late 12th and early 13th centuries would later be imitated by Chōgen, who created his own an inner network of monastic disciples who served as Tōdaiji estate managers, and sculptors, as well as an outer network of donors and common workers who provided the revenues and raw materials for the temple’s reconstruction.

In order to establish fraternity between the members of Chōgen’s inner network based on their shared Pure Land devotion, Chōgen would turn to another practice with precedent in China, the use of autonyms and religious affiliation characters by society brethren.

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167. This temple name refers to Mt. Lu in China, the location of Huiyuan’s original Pure Land society.

168. Ide (2001), p. 53-54.



Figure 17. *Amitābha Triad*. Zhang Sigong 張思恭. Hanging scroll. Southern Song Dynasty. Rozanji 廬山寺, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Seichi Ninpō*, no. 58, p. 65.

## Precedents for Amitābha names and lay temple construction in China

Chōgen was famous for bestowing Amitābha names on the close disciples who formed his inner network. These names consisted of a single character added to the Japanese name for Amitābha, “Amidabutsu” 阿弥陀仏. Chōgen’s specific use of this nomenclature is unprecedented in either China or Japan. There are some records of Chinese Buddhists part or the entirety of Amitābha’s name as a self-reference, but no examples of using Amitābha’s name as a shared identity for members of a network of followers. However, outside of institutionalized Pure Land societies, the basic concept of lay religious adherents using the same names or characters in order to signify their participation in a group was a typical practice in the Southern Song by Chōgen’s time, one with which he may have become familiar during his travels.

During the Southern Song, lay associations of several types formed that can be distinguished by the nature of their communal activities. Such groups have been studied by Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章<sup>169</sup> and B.J. Ter Harr.<sup>170</sup> Some lay associations were established around specific monasteries, and contributed funds for assemblies commemorating religious holidays such as the Buddha’s birthday, tomb-sweeping day (*qingming* 清明), or All Souls Day (*yulanhui* 盂蘭會). Other associations held wakes on the night of each *gengshen* 庚申

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169. See Chikusa, Ch. 7.

170. Ter Harr, p. 16-63 concentrates on lay Buddhist groups during the Song.



day in order to prevent the Three Corpse Worms (*sanshi* 三尸) from ascending to heaven in order to report one's sins.<sup>171</sup>

In some lay Buddhist associations, devotees used autonyms – self-referential names that distinguished their spiritual collectivism. One of the larger associations has been identified and studied by Chikusa in documents from Liangzhe xilu 兩浙西路 dated to 1194 and 1204, in which lay adherents or their temples are referenced as “the People of the Way of the White Lotus Cloister on Nanshan” (*Nanshan baiyun'an daomin* 南山白雲庵道民), “the People of the Way of the White Lotus [Society] of Nanshan in Yuhang” (*Yuhang nanshan baiyun daoren* 餘杭南山白雲道人), and “private cloister of the People of the Way” (*daoren si'an*) 道人私庵. “White Lotus,” used in some of these designations, references the ideal of Huiyuan's Pure Land society on Lushan, and appear to signal their intention to recreate his group.<sup>172</sup> Chikusa coined the word “People of the Way” (*C. daomin, J. dōmin* 道民) to categorically refer to persons who took such autonyms. Liangzhe xilu, where the People of the Way were active during the Song, included Hangzhou and the area to the north. It also bordered Liangzhe donglu 兩浙東路, the location of Ningbo, Ayuwangshan, and Tiantaishan to the south, where Chōgen is known to have traveled. Autonyms for the People of the Way also appear with increasing frequency in sources from the latter half of the 12th century, including in the *Collected Documents of the Song* (*Song huiyao* 宋會要), showing an

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171. Ter Harr, p. 30, summarizing Wu Zimu's *Record of Reminiscing on the Past*, an early 14th c. document that purports to summarize lay assemblies activities in the Late Southern Song.

172. Chikusa, p. 277. “The Way,” used frequently in these autonyms, had long been established as a general term for a path of spiritual or moral advancement for many religions in China, including Buddhism.

increase in lay participation in such groups during the period of Chōgen's three visits to China.<sup>173</sup>

“People of the Way” was a relatively common expression used to refer to monks as early as the Northern and Southern Dynasties (Nanbeichao 南北朝, 420-589), and continued to be used for this purpose. However, by the Song Dynasty, primarily laypeople adopted this autonym. Other autonoms used by the People of the Way include “One of the Way” (*daoche* 道者), “Friend of the Way” (*daoyou* 道友), “Lady of the Way” (*daogu* 道姑), “Woman of the Way” (*nüdao* 女道), and “Person of the Way in White Clothes” (*baiyi daoche* 白衣道者).<sup>174</sup> During the Song, People of the Way helped to finance the printing of editions of the Buddhist canon individually or in small groups. Sources from the Yuan 元 (1271-1368), which have many more references to the People of the Way, indicate they communally financed good works projects in larger groups of twenty to thirty people. By the early 13th century, some sources discuss “Lords of the Way” (*daogong* 道公) as donors to specific temples.<sup>175</sup>

Another naming practice used by the People of the Way involved religious affiliation characters – single characters usually adopted in place of the generation name (*zibei* 字輩). In 12th and 13th century Southern Song documents, Ter Harr found thirty-two such names,

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173. Ter Harr, p. 31-32.

174. *Ibid.* See p. 305-306 for a list of specific documents in which these names appear and the context for their usage where known. “White clothes” referred to the color worn historically by lay Buddhist disciples in contrast to the black or darker colored robes used by ordained monastics.

175. Chikusa, p. 277-280.

which repeat one of the following characters: *dao* 道 (“way”), *zhi* 智 (“wisdom”), *yuan* 圓 (“perfect”), *pu* 普 (“universal”), *miao* 妙 (“wondrous”), and *jue* 覺 (“realization”).<sup>176</sup> These characters were adopted upon taking the lay Buddhist vows: not to kill, steal, commit adultery, speak falsely or drink alcohol, though other lists of commandments also existed.<sup>177</sup> These characters did not replace one’s surname, and thus were not true pseudonyms in the sense of Chōgen’s Amitābha names. However, the autonyms used by the People of the Way were similar to Chōgen’s Amitābha in that the character that preceded “Amidabutsu” in Chōgen’s names was also a character that referenced a common Buddhist concept. Both sets of identifiers were used in order to create a sense of organizational fraternity.

The “People of the Way” engaged in social and religious activities both inside and outside the purview of monasteries. One of the most attested activities was bridge building, a form of good works with long doctrinal precedent. Bridge building is discussed in the *Zhude futian jing* 諸德福田經,<sup>178</sup> which categorizes it as one of the seven “fields of merit” since bridges aided both the weak and disabled, who could not otherwise cross rivers or streams. The Song was also a period when older wooden bridges were replaced by sturdier, stone constructions, as evinced in records such as the *Revised History of Hangzhou Composed in the Xianchun Reign Period* (*Xianchun Piling zhi* 咸淳毗陵志), which mentions

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176. Ter Harr, p. 39-40.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

178. T16, n. 683.

the construction of several stone bridges as replacements in Changzhou 常州.<sup>179</sup> 12th and 13th century examples abound of involvement of People of the Way in bridge masonry.<sup>180</sup>

The People of the Way were viewed as a uniquely identifiable movement based on proscriptions levied against the group by the Song authorities several times, including in 1198.<sup>181</sup> The reason for government intervention was primarily due to the group's establishment of cloisters constructed without official government consent, though memorials to the throne also sometimes protested that such cloisters were used as refuges for bandits. The establishment of cloisters by the People of the Way was connected to a larger phenomenon – the establishment of “grave temples” (*fensi* 墳寺) by officials.<sup>182</sup> From the end of the Tang, such institutions were built as private chapels housing the remains of ancestors, but the frequency of their construction increased during the Song. Because the land allocated for grave temples was untaxed, some officials operated these temples as tax shelters by “donating” large amounts of property to the temples, thereby removing their property from landholding registries. Some People of the Way received patronage from grave temple landholders by working as clerics who maintained the temples and performed rituals for the well-being of the owner's ancestors interred there.<sup>183</sup> Such clerics were not

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179. Chikusa (1982), p. 270-271.

180. Chikusa points out several examples in the historical documents he catalogues about the People of the Way. See Chikusa (1982), p. 265-269.

181. Ter Harr, p. 42.

182. These structures were also sometimes known as “Temples of Enlightenment” (*putisi* 菩提寺).

183. Chikusa, p. 273-274.

necessarily officially ordained monks or nuns, and so in some cases should have been eligible for corvée labor. Thus, the central authorities viewed the People of the Way as one part of a larger problem concerning the development of local religious customs that threatened tax revenues and enabled delinquency. On the other hand, the local gentry who hired People of the Way to serve at their chapels seem to have viewed them as devout Buddhists with authentic intentions.

However, financial considerations were not the only motivation for building grave temples. Minor officials also built them in great numbers during the Song even though they received no tax benefits, since their temples were not officially recognized by the state. Many of these temples were built by the growing class of Song officials who obtained government positions through the more meritocratic civil service exams administered during the period. As the bureaucracy proliferated, many of these minor officials were forced to serve in locales far from their hometowns.<sup>184</sup> When they died, their bodies were usually buried locally in the jurisdiction where they served, rather than at an ancestral gravesite. As a result, their descendants were not always in a position to adhere to the calendar of regular ritual performances that would transfer merit to their spirits and help ensure a good rebirth. If an official's children had the financial means, they could still build a grave temple near their father's grave, but regulations during the Song prevented the sons of officials from inheriting the privileges of their fathers' offices, jeopardizing the financial stability of family lineages. In some cases, the sons of minor officials were officials themselves, and might likewise have been posted to far-flung regions. For these reasons, there were great incentives for officials

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184. *Ibid.*, p. 130-131.

with the means to establish a temple while still alive, and hire a Buddhist priest who would perform the necessary rituals after one's death.<sup>185</sup>

The practice of constructing grave temples before one's death may have influenced the Japanese rite known as “*gyakushu*” 逆修, in which one holds a funeral for oneself while still living. For most of the Heian Period, these rites were only practiced by aristocrats, but by the Kamakura Period had spread to the upper levels of the warrior class<sup>186</sup> and even common people.<sup>187</sup> By the 13th century, inscriptions for these rituals were commonly added to small stone pagodas, a number of which remain today. An influential text upon the development of *gyakushu* rituals was the *Kanjō zuigan ōjō jippō jōdokyō* 灌頂隨願往生十方淨土淨, which says that if one performs good deeds for the dead, one receives 6/7 of the merit produced, with the remaining 1/7 transferred to the deceased. Using simple math, devotees concluded that holding a funeral service for oneself was even more efficient, since 100% of the merit could be conserved. This particular text interpreted *gyakushu* in Pure Land terms and was known to Hōnen, who lectured on the subject.<sup>188</sup> The relationship between Song grave temples and medieval Japanese *gyakushu* rites is not entirely clear, but the introduction of Song Pure Land practice by Chōgen and other monks during the period may have played a role.

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185. *Ibid.*, p. 133-134.

186. Kawakatsu, p. 159.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

188. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Returning to the People of the Way, many of the unlicensed cloisters they built were amalgamated with grave temples in extant historical records, complicating an exact count. However, it seems clear that the establishment of small cloisters and grave temples grew significantly in the Northern Song and especially by the Southern Song, suggesting that at least a moderate portion of the increase in construction of small cloisters was explained by the simultaneous growth in confraternities of the People of the Way, who funded the construction of their own temples during this period.<sup>189</sup> The *Jiatai wuxing zhi* 嘉泰吳興志 lists temples constructed in each county of Huzhou 湖州 from the Three Kingdoms through the Southern Song. Huzhou was a prefecture in the Liangzhe xilu 兩浙西路 bordering Taihu Lake 太湖, just north of Hangzhou.<sup>190</sup> During the Southern Song, 63% (17/27) of the temples constructed in this province were small cloisters or grave temples, a number considerably higher than the 15% (2/15) built during the Northern Song. The increase in the proportion of private chapels to large temples is also evident in other provinces, including Changzhou 常州, which bordered Huzhou to the north. According to the *Wanli yixingshen zhi* 萬歷宜興縣志, concerning Yixing County 宜興縣 in Changzhou, the number of cloisters constructed in the Northern Song increased to 60% (3/5) of the total number of new temples from just 26% (5/19) during the Sui and Tang. This number further increased to 65% (20/31) during the Southern Song. The explosion in small temple construction precipitated the government to attempt prohibition of new temples less than thirty bays in size, and even demolish those that

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189. One record in particular describes the Hangzhou People of the Way founding a cloister in Deqing 德清 in order to facilitate their custom of distributing tea and hot water at religious festivals (Ter Harr, p. 41-42).

190. See Tan, p. 59-60.

had already been built.<sup>191</sup> However, based on the continued construction of these temples throughout the Southern Song and Yuan, such proscriptions seem to have been ineffective.<sup>192</sup>

Members of other lay Buddhist societies known as White Cloud (*Baiyun* 白雲) or White Lotus Societies also constructed their own temples during the Song and Yuan. The founder of the White Cloud movement of the Northern Song, Kong Qingjue 孔清覺 (1043-1121), supposedly the fifty-second generational descendent of Confucius, built ten cloisters in Huzhou in 1107, and another cloister on Jingshan 菁山 in Wucheng County 烏程縣 in Huzhou. Other centers of this movement included Zengshan 甌山, Songlin 松林, and Shanzhu 善住 in Jiaying Province 嘉興府. Upon his death, Qingjue's ashes were spread across several mountains in the region, providing an indication of the widespread geographical scope of his movement.<sup>193</sup> Likewise, Mao Zhiyuan, founder of a Song White Lotus Society, built a White Lotus Penance Hall (*Bailian changtang* 白蓮懺堂) near Lake Dianshan 殿山.<sup>194</sup> Because the White Cloud and White Lotus movements were founded near urban centers with institutionalized Tiantai Pure Land societies, these movements may initially have developed as offshoots of their institutional cousins.

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191. Chikusa, p. 273-276.

192. Ter Harr, p. 41-42.

193. Chikusa, p. 286-287.

194. Ter Harr, p. 65.



## Conclusions

The Pure Land Buddhism Chōgen encountered in China during the Southern Song differed in many ways from Japan. As seen in the evolution of the tales of rebirth genre of Buddhist literature, Song monks popularized Pure Land practice among common people by compiling vernacular biographies of successful entrants to Amitābha's paradise that included lay devotees from the ordinary classes. This type of literature could be narrated to illiterate audiences with the aim of homogenizing Buddhist practice outside the confines of monasteries. In contrast, Japanese tales of rebirth maintained a nearly exclusive focus on the lives of aristocratic monks and laypeople, illustrating the segregation that existed between monks in the major institutions of Japanese Buddhist learning and the common populace. Similarly, while the Song lay Pure Land societies founded by Shengchang, Zhiyi, and Zhili catered to a wide cross section of society, Pure Land groups in Japan prior to Chōgen only existed as small gatherings of Japanese aristocrats, who organized Pure Land rites for their exclusive benefit.

The structure of Zhili's society was two-tiered, with an inner network of monks devoted to meditation at the Yanqingsi halls for sixteen visualizations and an outer network of lay disciples engaged in simpler practices such as *nianfo* recitation. This structure is supported by the art historical record of Ningbo Buddhist painters, whose work can be categorized based on the intended audience within each tier. As will become apparent, the structure of the society at Yanqingsi would greatly influence Chōgen's ideas about Buddhist social formation, which he adapted for the purpose of rebuilding Tōdaiji.

Chōgen also may have used the autonyms adopted by the People of the Way as models for the Amidabutsu names he introduced in Japan. Judging from records of small

cloister construction during the Southern Song, the People of the Way proliferated across the region of Zhejiang Chōgen traveled, making an encounter probable. The People of the Way's construction of rural chapels and undertaking of good works such as bridge building were strikingly similar to Chōgen's activities as Tōdaiji *kanjin hijiri*. These activities included constructing Pure Land *bessho* on estates across Japan and aiding local communities through the mobilization of workforces to repair bridges, roads, and harbors, topics to which we turn now.

### Chapter 3.

#### **Task: Tōdaiji Reconstruction**

In the twelfth month of 1180, Taira no Shigehira 平重衡 (1158-1185), general of the Taira armies, burned down Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji 興福寺 in Nara following battles between the temples' monks and Shigehira's troops, one incident in a larger nation-wide unrest known as the Gempei War (*Gempei kassen* 源平合戦, 1180-1185). The destruction of the Tōdaiji Great Buddha and Great Buddha Hall were unprecedented in the historical annals of Japan, underscoring not only the destabilization of the political sphere, but also the destruction of Buddhist authority.

Shortly after the devastation of Nara, Emperor Go-Shirakawa 後白河天皇 (1127-1192)<sup>1</sup> and other statesmen grappled with the financial difficulties of rebuilding the country's largest and most prestigious Buddhist institutions. Tōdaiji was at the fore of consideration due to its long history and designation as the head of the Kokubunji 国分寺 system of provincial temples established by Tōdaiji's original patron, Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (701-756). The reconstruction of Tōdaiji would thus amount to a symbolic rebirth of Buddhism for the entire country.

The recasting of the Great Buddha, the largest in the East Asian world, along with the reconstruction of the temple's halls, would require considerable finances for materials and

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1. Before his death, the child Emperor Antoku 安德天皇 (1177-1185), speaking officially for his Taira masters, apologized for the burning of Nara and pledged his support to Go-Shirakawa for the reconstruction. In that letter of support, Go-Shirakawa was clearly named as the main patron for the *kanjin* "temple solicitation" campaign. Go-Shirakawa returned to power after the death of Taira no Kiyomori and served in that role for the remainder of his lifetime.

labor. Previously in the Heian Period, temples had depended economically upon several sources of income, including subsidies from the government, donations from aristocratic families, and revenues from sustenance households. By the late Heian, temples' incomes derived almost exclusively from *shōen* 荘園, estates commended to temples tax-free. These estates were worked by peasants and managed by controllers appointed by the proprietors. However, financing the Tōdaiji reconstruction through revenues from estates historically owned by the temple was unfeasible for several reasons. First, the temple's estate holdings were designated for the upkeep of the temple; the rebuilding of the temple's structures from the ground up and recasting of the Great Buddha required investment on a much larger scale. Second, the Gempei War resulted in sporadic turmoil until 1185, disrupting the production on some estates. Finally, Tōdaiji was in a dispute with Kōfukuji 興福寺 regarding certain estates even prior to the razing of Nara, and thus Tōdaiji's theoretical allocation of revenues was not necessarily available in practice.<sup>2</sup>

The answer to these difficulties was a *kanjin* 勧進 “temple solicitation” campaign, which was typically organized by a charismatic monk who could solicit donations from aristocratic and warrior families, as well as common households. Generally speaking, “*kanjin*” referred to the proselytization of Buddhism by a monk among the secular populace. As part of this practice, the *kanjin hijiri*, or “saint” who endeavored to spread the Buddhist faith, would accept donations of cash or rice from supporters and use the income to finance dharma assemblies or temple construction projects. For this reason, over time the term came to refer to campaigns whose primary objective was the construction of a temple, as was the

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2. Goodwin (1994), p. 75.

case with Tōdaiji.<sup>3</sup> From the Nara Period, monks and nuns organized *kanjin* campaigns for small temples that had minimal access to other forms of public or private financial support. As part of these campaigns, they contributed to the welfare of local populations by organizing good works projects, encouraging the adoption of the bodhisattva precepts, and lecturing on Buddhist themes in simple terms that the locals could understand.<sup>4</sup> In other cases, *kanjin* campaigns were organized when temples were unable to secure funds from the head institutions of their religious organization, for example during the lineage feuds that divided Tōji 東寺 and Kōyasan 高野山 of the Shingon School or Hieizan 比叡山 and Miidera 三井寺 of the Tendai School. During the *insei* period (1086-1192) of rule by retired emperors, *kanjin* campaigns became more vigorous due to the organizational ability of the campaign solicitors.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of the Tōdaiji *kanjin* campaign, a suitable candidate for the *kanjin hijiri* – in this context meaning the “chief solicitor” of the campaign – would not only raise funds, but also supervise the technicians who would rebuild the temple, including casters, architects, carvers, masons, and builders. As part of the reconstruction, these technicians would be charged with recasting the Great Buddha; designing the halls, gates, pagodas, and subtemples; carving statues of the central Buddhas, bodhisattva attendants, and guardian deities; and finally rebuilding the temple itself.

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3. Yokouchi, p. 540.

4. Goodwin (1994), p. 17.

5. Gomi, p. 108-109.

Following avenues explored in the first two chapters, we can surmise that many of Chōgen's previous experiences made him one of the most qualified candidate to serve as Tōdaiji's *kanjin hijiri*. Early in life, Chōgen earned the title of "*hijiri*," or "saint," after enduring the ascetic rigors on Mt. Ōmine an unprecedented five times. As such, he was already thought to emanate spiritual power that could be transmitted to others. This reputation had served Chōgen when he sought financing for his trips to China. His reputation was no doubt bolstered by accounts of his travels there that included crossing the Tiantaishan Rock Bridge to meet the Sixteen Arhats, and witnessing the unveiling of relics to pilgrims at Ayuwangshan.

Chōgen's experiences as the most well-travelled continental explorer of his time also served his candidacy in a number of practical ways. First, Chōgen's observations of Chinese lay Pure Land social organization at Yanqingsi provided a model for the Pure Land societies of monks, nuns, warriors, and common persons he organized at his *bessho*, Pure Land sub-temples he built on the estates that funded the Tōdaiji reconstruction. Chōgen's Pure Land activities at these temples established a common bond between his donors, managers, and estate workers, who believed they could attain salvation in Amitābha's Pure Land by participating. Second, Chōgen's technical knowledge of Song temple architecture appealed to Go-Shirakawa and leaders of the Taira clan, two of Tōdaiji's most important sponsors. Go-Shirakawa had previously favored contemporary continental building styles for the temples he underwrote, and the Taira were famously fond of items imported from the continent. Third, during his trips to China, Chōgen forged personal relationships with Chinese technicians who would supervise the recasting of the Great Buddha and reconstruction of Tōdaiji. Altogether, Chōgen's understanding of the structure of Song Pure Land societies,

knowledge of Chinese architecture, and personal relationships with Chinese technicians set him apart from other possible candidates, making him the ideal choice for *kanjin hijiri*. As a result, Emperor Go-Shirakawa placed their faith in Chōgen to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of restoring the temple to former glory. Chōgen would serve in this capacity for twenty-five years, from age sixty-one to his death at age eighty-six.

This chapter explores some of the economic, religious, and infrastructural aspects of Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign. Economically, Chōgen depended primarily on donations for the recasting of the Great Buddha, but was forced to develop a group of estates across Western Japan to fund the reconstruction of Tōdaiji itself. Religiously, Chōgen founded *bessho* on those estates in order to spread Pure Land worship to the provinces, promising salvation for those who assisted Chōgen's cause. From an infrastructural perspective, Chōgen built or improved public roads, bridges, reservoirs, and ports, some of which facilitated the transport of raw materials to Nara, and others that were primarily philanthropic, benefitting local farmers and sailors.<sup>6</sup> Of course, Chōgen did not accomplish all of this alone – the reconstruction of Tōdaiji was in many ways a national project. While donations were freely given in some cases, some aspects of Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign contributions were enforced by the authority of the retired emperor and shogunate. Finally, the legitimacy of Chōgen's campaign was consciously elevated by historical comparisons with Gyōki 行基 (668-749), the alleged original *kanjin hijiri* for the construction of Tōdaiji in the 8th century.

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6. Yokouchi, p. 539

## Economic and technological hardships in reconstructing Tōdaiji

The reconstruction of the Great Buddha and the halls of Tōdaiji was a project of economic and technological enormity unlike any construction in Japan since Shōmu vowed to build the original temple centuries prior. Chōgen was appointed to the office of *kanjin hijiri* for Tōdaiji in 1181, however at that time the civil war had not yet ended, and so the reconstruction began even as the chaos prevailed.

Chōgen's first task was to recast the Great Buddha, the centerpiece of the temple and the country's most significant Buddhist symbol. The recasting began with the coils of hair (*rahatsu* 螺髪) that would be individually inserted into the Buddha's head, a relatively simple task that could be completed while Chōgen contemplated the hurdles for repairing the rest of the statue.<sup>7</sup> In order to ensure the statue would be untainted by bad karma, the casters were administered the Buddhist precepts before starting their work. Buddhist sculptors of wooden statues during this period generally underwent a Misogi 禊 ceremony that purified one's mind and body by ritual cleansing. The Great Buddha's casters probably participated in such a ceremony before beginning their work.<sup>8</sup>

As the recasting began in 1181, the government-appointed secular official in charge of the Tōdaiji reconstruction, Fujiwara no Yukitaka 藤原行隆 (1130-1187), traveled to Nara to inspect the damage to the Great Buddha along with a group of experts. Once they determined

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7. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 530.

8. Iwata, p. 11.



that much of the statue would require recasting, Yukitaka and Chōgen consulted with local casters,<sup>9</sup> but Chōgen professed concern about their ability to refashion the statue.<sup>10</sup>

Because of the inexperience of Japanese casters with a project of this scale, Chōgen turned to a Chinese technician, Chen Heqing 陳和卿 (active *ca.* 1182-1217), to oversee the casting process. Chen was likely a trader by profession, but possessed extensive knowledge in several technical fields, including casting, architecture, carpentry, and ship-building.<sup>11</sup> According to the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, Chen Heqing, along with his brother, Chen Fozhu 陳佛鑄, and several other Chinese craftsmen arrived in Japan around the time Chōgen prepared to repair the Great Buddha. After meeting Chen Heqing, Chōgen quickly appointed him as technical director for the project,<sup>12</sup> and by the seventh month of 1182, Chen was immersed in planning. However, the more likely scenario is that Chōgen first met Chen in the Hakata Chinatown or during one of his voyages to southern China. Once Chōgen realized that

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9. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 10-12.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

11. Chen would later assist with the construction of the Great Buddha Hall. Also, with the beneficence of Minamoto no Sanetomo 源実朝 (1192-1219), he built a boat in Kamakura, though it was said the boat could not reach the open sea due to obstructions posed by coastal geography (Nishita, p. 25-26).

12. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 13.

Japanese casters were unable to complete the Great Buddha, he called on Chen for assistance.<sup>13</sup>

Before proceeding to the casting of the head and body, a miniature model was carved as a template. In the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen mentions a half-*jōroku* 丈六 statue of the Great Buddha (*daibutsu no katahotoke* 大仏型仏) that he installed at Gakukanji 額観寺. Unfortunately, the statue no longer remains and little is known of this temple; however, based on Chōgen's description, the statue seems to have originally functioned as this model.

The next step was to create a mold for the Great Buddha's head. In 1182, the vice-director of the project, Ozuki no Takamoto 小槻隆職 (1135-1198) told Kanezane that Chōgen was creating "an earthen mold" for the head. This mold probably referred to the inner mold (*nakago* 中型) that, when combined with an outer mold (*sotogo* 外型), created an interstice for the molten bronze alloy that would form the cast.<sup>14</sup>

Chen worked with a staff of seven Chinese craftsmen and fourteen Japanese casters to create the right hand of the Great Buddha in the third month of 1183, and in the next month the team began work on the head. Chōgen and Chen Heqing first built three furnaces

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13. Iwata, p. 12. Another source that speaks to Chen's Chinese technical influence on the reconstruction of Tōdaiji is the 14th century *Honen shōnin eden* 法然上人絵伝, which says that during the construction of the roof of the Great Buddha Hall, Chōgen favored the use of a technique that involved laying lath strips (*komai* 小舞) under the rafters (*taruki* 垂木). This technique had not previously been used in Japan, and most of his carpentry team was against using it, even responding with ridicule. The late date of this source makes the episode dubious, however it still provides a sense of Chōgen's urge to experiment with novel architectural styles (Iwata, p. 12) probably introduced by Chen Heqing and his Chinese craftsmen.

14. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku, zōbutsu hen* 造仏篇 and *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki* 東大寺造立供養記, reprinted in Kobayashi, p. 52-55. Iwata, p. 11-12.

approximately one by one *jō* 丈<sup>15</sup> on a mound that was originally constructed behind the statue in 827 in order to prevent the statue from tilting to one side. Coal and wood was burned in order to heat the fires and melt the bronze alloy. During this time, the abbot of Kōfukuji 興福寺, Kakuken 覚憲 (1131-1213), visited the construction site to perform sutra and mantra recitations. The creation of the bronze cast of the Great Buddha was divided into about fourteen stages, though several accidents interrupted the work. At one point, a receptacle designed to catch molten metal that dripped during the casting caught fire, though fortunately attendants were able to extinguish the flames quickly with minimal damage. The casting of the head was finished by the fifth month and was then transported to a different site for polishing and detailing. In all, more than fifty tons of bronze, thirty-seven kilos of gold, and three hundred seventy kilos of mercury were used for the main cast of the statue in addition to the gilt plating that adorned the statue's front. The abbot of Tōdaiji at the time, Teiki 禎喜 (1099-1183), praised Chen Heqing for his accomplishment, and presented him with fourteen swift horses and ten rolls (*ki* 疋) of high-quality silk. In 1183 the Taira were defeated, but the casting of the arms of the Great Buddha continued through the political transition. In the sixth month of 1184, Yūkitaka again visited to watch the completion of the statue's body.<sup>16</sup> Much of the financing of the Great Buddha was accomplished from donations by aristocrats such as Fujiwara no Hidehira 藤原秀衡 (1122?-1187), who gave

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15. About three meters.

16. Iwata, p. 12.

5,000 *ryō* of cash, and warriors led by Yoritomo, who secured 1,000 *ryō* of cash along with gold dust, high-quality silks, and rice.<sup>17</sup>

The eye-opening ceremony for the Great Buddha, the consecration that endows the statue with the powers of the living deity, was held in the eighth month of 1185 with attendees representing the most powerful religious and secular institutions in the country. Contrary to forecasts, there was heavy rain on the day of the ceremony, though abbreviated rites were performed to the accompaniment of dance and music. The brush used to paint the circles of the statue's eyes was borrowed from the Shōsōin 正倉院, the Tōdaiji treasure house that stores artifacts from the reigns of Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō 光明天皇 (701-760). That particular brush had been used by the Indian monk Bodhisena (*J. Bodaissen* 菩提僊那, 704-760), the officiant for the original consecration ceremony in the 8th century, in order to paint the eyes of the first Great Buddha. Go-Shirakawa, assisted by his closest officials, was raised on scaffolding so that he could personally accomplish this task, a gesture no doubt lauded by the Buddhist community but which met with disdain in some corners. Kanezane, for example, scornfully wrote in his diary, "so the emperor is now a Buddhist priest?"<sup>18</sup>

In accordance with Go-Shirakawa's wishes, the consecration ceremony was held before the gilding and detailing on the body of the statue was finished. This was unusual, since the eye-opening ceremony also functioned as the unveiling of the statue for the public.

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

18. The eye-opening ceremony is recorded in a number of sources, including *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 96-98, and the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 27-31. Compare with the original eye-opening ceremony during the 8th c. in *Tōdaiji yōroku*, p. 359-360. Also see Iwata, p. 13.

Kanezane did not attend the ceremony, but pressed Minamoto no Masayori 源雅頼 (1127-1190) for the details. Masayori responded that he thought the new Great Buddha compared unfavorably to the original one, partially because the body did not “glow” without the gold-plating.<sup>19</sup> Later, however, when Kanezane first saw the statue with his own eyes in 1189, he remarked that the appearance was marvelous.<sup>20</sup>

In 1192, Go-Shirakawa, who had served as Chōgen’s most important patron, passed away. In the meantime, the Kamakura shogunate had consolidated their political power following the *Ōshū seibatsu* 奥州征伐 military campaign against the Northern Fujiwara in 1189. After Go-Shirakawa’s death, Shogun Yoritomo assumed his role as chief sponsor of Tōdaiji.

The manufacture of the mandorla for the Great Buddha did not begin until 1194. The large mound that had supported the original statue and housed the furnaces for the recasting first had to be removed. The new mandorla, created by the In school (*inpa* 院派) of Buddhist sculptors, included sixteen transformation bodies of the Buddha, but was abbreviated in comparison with the original one, which had featured more than five-hundred flying celestials (*hiten* 飛天) and transformation Buddhas (*kebutsu* 化仏).<sup>21</sup>

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19. At this point, it seems Kanezane was unhappy with the efforts expended on the Great Buddha, which might explain his negative commentary on the proceedings, attributed to Masayori. Tension between Go-Shirakawa and Kanezane is prevalent in Kanezane's diary. The latter did not want the eye-opening ceremony to be performed before the Daibutsu statue was complete, but Go-Shirakawa requested the ceremony go ahead (Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed., 2012, p. 217).

20. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 554. Iwata, p. 13.

21. Iwata, p. 14. For manufacture of the mandorla, see Kobayashi, p. 228 and 233.

The construction of the Great Buddha Hall proved even more difficult than recasting the Great Buddha. The first problem was funding the reconstruction. The Great Buddha was financed primarily with donations from noble and warrior benefactors; however with these sources expended, Chōgen was forced to find other financial means to build the temple that would house the statue. The rebuilding of Tōdaiji differed from that of Kōfukuji 興福寺, also destroyed during the war. Kōfukuji was the clan temple of the Fujiwara and a representation of their divine legitimacy. As a result, both the court and Fujiwara nobles had a large stake in the temple's reconstruction, and undertook its financing. In contrast, Tōdaiji lacked a fixed economic base to support the repairs. These differences in finance also help to explain the difference in architectural styles used to rebuild the two temples: while Kōfukuji's sponsors demanded a traditional style that reflected the apex of Fujiwara rule prior to the *insei*, Chōgen was free of donor interference to experiment with novel ideas at Tōdaiji inspired by continental models.<sup>22</sup>

Chōgen initially planned to obtain raw materials from Yoshino 吉野 and Ise 伊勢, but that plan was unsuccessful. Chōgen next sought to acquire estates that he and his lieutenants could manage directly. Some of the most important estates acquired by Chōgen included those from the provinces of Suō, Harima, Iga, and Bizen:

*Suō estates.* The Tōdaiji estates in Suō were the oldest of those commended to Tōdaiji outside the Kinai 畿内 region in the vicinity of the capital. Some of these estates were donated to the temple in 1186 by Go-Shirakawa primarily to source timbers for the monumental mode of architecture planned for the Great Buddha Hall. Another estate, Tokuji

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22. Nishita, p. 25-6.

no ho 得地保, was provided by Kujō Kanezane. According to the *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡, Chōgen began to harvest timber from the Suō estates in 1186. Like many others Chōgen acquired on behalf of Tōdaiji, they had long histories under previous proprietors before they were commended to the temple, and so were not initially developed to finance its reconstruction. One such estate in Suo was Fushino 榎野,<sup>23</sup> which originally dated to the Nara Period, and was recorded as early as 754 in records of industries from the region.<sup>24</sup> During the Heian period, the estate was abandoned for a brief time, but Chōgen submitted an appeal to redevelop the property for Tōdaiji. In contrast, the nearby Miyano 宮野 estate was developed by Chōgen specifically for the Tōdaiji reconstruction, and continued to yield substantial revenue for the temple well into the 13th century. After acquiring the Suō estates, Chōgen encountered technical difficulties transporting timber from the province to Nara via existing routes. This prompted him to develop a new route that combined roads with checking stations along a river in order to transport logs to the sea, where they could be shipped to the Kinai region. He also encountered troubles with *jitō* 地頭 land stewards who resisted the allocation of resources from the estates they managed to Tōdaiji. Such troubles precipitated the intervention of Minamoto Yoritomo and Kanezane, and initiated a troubling pattern Chōgen experienced with provincial authorities who resisted his influence.<sup>25</sup>

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23. This estate is mentioned in Chōgen's will, in which he bequeaths it to his disciple, Jōhan 定範 (1165-1225).

24. According to the *Tōdaiji sho shōen monjo mokuroku* 東大寺諸莊園文書目錄 (1153). See Nojiri, p. 41-42.

25. Nojiri, p. 41-42. Chōgen discusses his difficulties with the Suō estate with Kanezane in *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 550.

*Harima estates.* The primary Tōdaiji estate in Harima was Ōbe 大部, which was created by concatenating the three estates of Narumi 垂水, Ao 粟生, and Ako'u 赤穂, all held by Tōdaiji before Chōgen's time. As with the Suō estates, provincial estate managers (*shūkō* 収公) and land stewards interfered with the management of the estate from the beginning of Chōgen's involvement. This time, Chōgen appealed to Go-Shirakawa for help, and the retired emperor responded by transferring ownership of the estate to Chōgen's own person. In 1200, Go-Toba pledged protection for the estate, and thereafter order was preserved by the shogunate.<sup>26</sup>

*Iga estates.* According to Chōgen's will, Chōgen managed three estates in Iga: Awa 阿波, Hirose 広瀬, and Yamada arimaru 山田有丸. These estates were located in the eastern part of the province and originally belonged to Taira officers who perished in the Gempei War before they were usurped by Yoritomo. Estates in Iga had served as an important economic base for Tōdaiji long before Chōgen's time. In 755, lands in Ayama 阿山 District near Yamatō Province were donated by Empress Kōken 孝謙 in order to supply timber for Tōdaiji repairs in the 8th century. At that time, the territory was mostly undeveloped forest land. Substantial development of this region began in the mid-10th century. Go-Shirakawa

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26. Nojiri, p. 42. The Ōbe estate was located in what is now Ono City 小野市 in Hyōgo Province 兵庫県. To the southwest of the *bessho*, now Jōdodō, is Jizō pond. According to legend, Chōgen cleaned his hoe in the pond after clearing eighty *chō* of land for the estate in one night. Jizō pond is also known as "muddy pond," (*nigoriike* 濁池), but each year on the anniversary of Chōgen's death, the fourth day of the sixth month, the water of the pond turns clear. Other local legends say that a grove on the bank of a pond to the north of the *bessho* on the Ōbe estate is named "saddle hanging pines" (*kurakake no matsu* 鞍掛松) because Chōgen hung his saddle and took a rest there one day. To the northwest of the *bessho* on a burial ground are several large stone pillars that are said to mark the gravesite of Kaikei 快慶, Chōgen's chief sculptor, though this is folklore (Nojiri, p. 42-43).



transferred the Iga estates to Chōgen in an 1190 edict; however, ownership was contested by local officials who demanded shares of the estates' profits after Go-Shirakawa death.<sup>27</sup>

*Bizen estates.* Estates in Bizen were consigned to Tōdaiji in 1193 in order to provide shingles for the roofing of the temple along with other supplies.<sup>28</sup> Tōdaiji previously controlled estates in the province, though some were exclusively developed for the Tōdaiji reconstruction. The Nanbokujō 南北条, Naganu 長沼, and Kanzaki 神前 estates in the southwest of Oku 邑久 district were originally owned by Go-Shirakawa and later donated to Tōdaiji through the intervention of Fujiwara no Yukitaka 藤原行隆 and the Bizen Governor, Taira no Yorimori 平頼盛. The revenues from the Bizen estates provided a major boost for Tōdaiji through the end of the 1190's as reconstruction of the temple's buildings dragged on.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Great Buddha Hall as ritual space**

Much of the raw material and revenue earned from the estates managed by Chōgen was used to construct the hall that would house the statue of the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji. Chōgen redesigned the layout of the hall, keeping some aspects from its original form while changing others. His reinterpretation of the interior was based upon an understanding of the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana, the cosmic Buddha, who had gradually displaced

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27. Nojiri, p. 43. See *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku* p. 340-341 for edicts by Go-Shirakawa mandating compliance from local authorities on the Iga estates.

28. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 834.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Vairocana, the original identity of the statue from Shōmu's time. Chōgen did not usher in this transformation of identity – as we will see it gradually took hold over centuries – but understanding the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana underpinned the logic of correspondences that motivated Chōgen's networking activities. According to that logic, Chōgen's Pure Land disciples were emanations of Amitābha Buddha, who in turn was an emanation of Mahāvairocana, whose form was ultimately realized in the Great Buddha statue. Moreover, the understanding of the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana provided an opportunity to publicize the “unbroken” links between Shingon monks in Japan and their school's progenitors in China and India, a lineage said to have originated with Mahāvairocana himself. Thus, as representatives of the Zen school were apt to do in later periods, Chōgen placed himself in a line of succession that traced its path to the origin of the Buddha's dharma.

#### *The changing identity of the Great Buddha*

The original Great Buddha, sponsored by Emperor Shōmu, was understood to be Vairocana Buddha (Birushana butsu 毘盧遮那仏), featured most prominently in the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* (*Kegonkyō* 華嚴經) and *Sutra of Brahma's Net* (*Bonmōkyō* 梵網經), where he is described as the universal body of the Buddha (*dharmakāya*) and the embodiment of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). In those texts, Vairocana is treated as transpatial and transtemporal, with the power to manifest himself in particular places and times in order to benefit sentient beings (one example being the manifestation of the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, in our world of Sahā). The “Vairocana Chapter” of the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* describes this Buddha in the following way:

His (Vairocana's) universal pervasiveness equates with the true Dharma realm. He manifests himself in every Buddha land,<sup>30</sup> and all other places of enlightenment conform to [his realm]. His boundless, wondrous form is pure, and in all the worlds there is nothing more brilliant. [His form] is endowed with many excellent marks, and each one of them is distinct and clear. In every palace his image appears, so that all sentient beings can see him with their own eyes. From his body emanates boundless transformation Buddhas,<sup>31</sup> as well as every color of light, which pervades the world.

其身周普等真法界，一切佛刹皆示出生，一切道場悉詣其所；無邊妙色，具足清淨；一切世間，無能映奪；具眾寶相，一一分明，一切宮殿悉現其像；一切眾生咸得目見無邊化佛從其身出，種種色光充滿世界。<sup>32</sup>

This presentation of Vairocana as the *dharmakāya* was the culmination of a lengthy development of “three bodies of the Buddha” (*S. trikaya*, *J. sanjin* 三身) doctrine that effectively merged three concepts: (1) the nature of reality as emptiness, (2) the teaching of the Buddha that explained how to attain that reality, and (3) the pervasiveness of the Buddha's existence. The understanding of the Great Buddha as Vairocana was the basis for the cosmological engravings on each of the twenty-eight lotus petals that surrounded the original statue's throne, which is still mostly extant today. On each of the lotus petals appears the Buddha with his entourage sitting above the Three Realms (*S. trailokya*, *J. sankai* 三界) of Formlessness (*S. ārūpya*, *J. mushiki* 無色), Form (*S. rūpa*, *J. shiki* 色), and Desire (*S. kāma*, *J. yoku* 欲), which are constituents of every world in the universe according to Buddhist cosmological theory. In the *Sutra of Brahma's Net*, Vairocana is said to reside in the

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30. *Buddha-kṣetra* (*J. bussetsu* 佛刹), a spiritual realm acquired by one who reaches perfect enlightenment.

31. *Nirmāṇa-buddha* (*J. kebutsu* 化佛), transformation bodies of the Buddha's dharma body (*dharmakāya*) that appear in the world of sentient beings to save them, e.g. Śākyamuni.

32. T10, n. 279, p. 54b23-b27.

Lotus Matrix World (*rengezō sekai* 蓮華藏世界), surrounded by a thousand flowers. Each of those flowers, in turn, contain one hundred million worlds, all with their own emanation of Vairocana in the form of Śākyamuni.<sup>33</sup>

The coextension of the nature of reality (*dharma*) and the body of the Buddha (*dharmakāya*) in the form of the “Great” Vairocana Buddha, or “Mahāvairocana,” was also a characteristic assertion of Esoteric Buddhism (*J. Shingon* 真言) in its two central texts, the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* (*J. Dainichikyō* 大日經) and the *Vajraśekhara Sutra* (*J. Kongōchōkyō* 金剛頂經). Both are preached by the Buddha in his cosmological body in contrast with all other sutras, which are preached by Śākyamuni in his transformation body. The interpretation of these two core Shingon texts and the tradition of their ritual enactment in Japan owed to the studies of Kūkai, who received transmission of the Shingon teachings from his Chinese master, Huiguo 惠果 (746-806), during Kūkai’s travel abroad in the Chinese capital of Chang’an 長安 in the late 8th century. Kūkai was influential at the Japanese court upon his return to Japan, and with the help of Emperors Saga 嵯峨天皇 (r. 809-823) and Junna 淳和 (r. 823-833), successfully established Shingon as the primary interpretive mechanism for understanding Buddhist texts and ritual. Kūkai’s efforts initiated the dual study of exoteric Buddhism, the teachings imparted in the exoteric sutras preached by Śākyamuni that dominated the intellectual attention of Nara ecclesiastics, and the Esoteric sutras preached by Mahāvairocana. Kūkai’s interpretive scheme became known as “exoteric-esoteric” (*kenmitsu* 顯密) Buddhism.

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33. T24, n. 1484, p. 997c6-c11.

A gradual transformation in the understanding of Vairocana Buddha as Mahāvairocana occurred through Kūkai's efforts, which included the institution of combined performances of the *Golden Light Sutra* Assembly (*gozai'e* 御齋会)<sup>34</sup> and the "Imperial Rite of the Second Seven Days of the New Year" (*goshichinichi no mishuhō* 後七日御修法)<sup>35</sup> at the Council Hall (Daigokuden 大極殿) and the Shingon Hall (Shingon'in 真言院) within the Imperial Palace. Rituals associated with the Golden Light Sutra had long been favored by the Japanese authorities because of that text's chapter on the Four Heavenly Kings (*shitennō* 四天王), who promise to protect the country of any ruler who enshrines the sutra. However, Kūkai's enactment of the *Golden Light Sutra* Assembly, based on his commentary, *Homage to the Secret of the Golden Light Sutra* (*Konshōōkyō kada* 金勝王經秘密伽陀), differed from previous performances. Kūkai emphasized the text's message as revealed through its "mantras" (*shingon* 真言), the *dhāraṇī* that appear in several chapters promising worldly and spiritual benefits to those who recite them. By intoning these mantras, Kūkai says that the practitioner will obtain union (*S. yoga, J. yuga* 瑜伽) with the specific Buddha, bodhisattva, or other deity who teaches them. As a result, the practitioner's deluded thoughts will transform into the enlightened thoughts of the deity.<sup>36</sup> The second ceremony that

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34. The *Golden Light Sutra*, on which this assembly was based, contains some elements of early esotericism. In Chapter Two, for instance, the sutra describes the four Buddhas who dwell in the cardinal directions, a concept that is found in the *Mandalas of the Two Worlds*.

35. The rites were performed each year on the seventh day of the first month for a period of seven days, hence the name for the Esoteric ritual. Together they were known as the "Dual Ritual Assemblies" (*ryōhōe* 両法会).

36. Abé (1999), p. 245-246. Mantras were summarized by Kūkai as "eliminating ignorance when meditated upon and recited. A single word contains a thousand truths; one can realize Suchness here and now." (Hakeda, p. 79, translation Hakeda; also see *Kōbō daishi zenshū* I, p. 561.)

accompanied the *Golden Light Sutra* Assembly, the “Imperial Rite of the Second Seven Days of the New Year,” was an Esoteric rite devised by Kūkai in order to empower the emperor with a wish-fulfilling jewel (*S. cintāmaṇi*, *J. nyoiju* 如意珠).<sup>37</sup> The combined form of exoteric-esoteric rites enacted at the Imperial Palace would become a general model for the performance of Buddhist rituals in religious institutions across Japan, including Tōdaiji.<sup>38</sup> From this time onwards, Shingon Buddhism and Mahāvairocana worship were ascendant.

By the latter half of the 11th century, the retired emperors had become major sponsors of the Shingon school, turning to images of Mahāvairocana and other Shingon-inspired artworks as the objects of devotion for temples they sponsored. The first such temple was Emperor Shirakawa’s 白河天皇 Hōsshōji 法勝寺, built near the eastern mountains of Kyōto. The temple was part of a series of temples collectively known as the Rokushōji 六勝寺

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37. Yokouchi, p. 530. For the development of this ritual, see Abé (1999), p. 347-355.

38. From the middle of the 10th century, after the conclusion of these dual ceremonies at the Imperial Palace, the exoteric and Shingon monks who participated assembled for doctrinal discussions. The chief representative of the delegation of Shingon monks, the Head Monk (*chōja* 長者) of Tōji 東寺, would begin by performing the Perfumed Water Purification (*kaji kōzui* 加持香水) for those in attendance. After that, the chief representative of the exoteric monks, the Head Monk of Kōfukuji, would lead the newly purified assembly in a lecture on the *Golden Light Sutra*. Another tangible expression of the dual nature of Buddhist rites from the mid-Heian period can be found in the Five Lions Scepter (*goshiji nyo* 五獅子如意) used in the most important lecture series of that period known as the “Three Assemblies” (San’e 三会). These lectures included the (1) Lecture on the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* (*Yuimae* 維摩会) at Kōfukuji 興福寺, (2) Lecture on the *Golden Light Sutra* (*Saishōe* 最勝会) at Yakushiji 薬師寺, and (3) Lecture on the *Golden Light Sutra* at the Nara Imperial Palace (*Gosai’e* 御齋会). The scepter was inscribed with a three-pronged vajra on the front as a symbol of Esoteric Buddhism, and with five lions on the back as symbols of exoteric Buddhism. The monk Enyō 延儼 used the scepter in 910 for the Vimalakīrti Assembly, after which it was always used by the lecturer in charge of the Three Assemblies (Yokouchi, p. 530).

temples, constructed as tangible symbols of the imperial court's power.<sup>39</sup> The object of worship in the Main Hall of Hosshōji was a gilded Mahāvairocana Buddha, surrounded by the four Buddhas of the Womb World. In front of the temple was an octagonal nine-storied pagoda, where the Five Wisdom Tathāgatas of the Diamond World (*gochi nyorai* 五智如來)<sup>40</sup> were installed. Together, the Main Hall and the pagoda formed the *Mandala of the Two Worlds*, the most recognizable images used in Esoteric Buddhism. In this way, Hosshōji brought Kūkai's Esoteric world view to the fore among the nation's temples.<sup>41</sup>

Kūkai was appointed the administrative head of Tōdaiji in 810, and in 822 established an *abhiṣeka* hall there for Esoteric ordinations, the first permanent structure for this purpose in Japan.<sup>42</sup> Even after he acquired control over Tōji temple as his main base of operations, the Shingon *abhiṣeka* hall remained at Tōdaiji, where novice monks in the Shingon School would first train and receive ordinations into all three precept traditions: the *vinaya*, the Mahāyāna *śīla*, and the Esoteric precepts.<sup>43</sup> Under Kūkai's leadership, Tōdaiji became the most prominent Shingon center in Nara.

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39. The other five were Sonshōji 尊勝寺, Saishōji 最勝寺, Enshōji 円勝寺, Jōshoji 成勝寺, and Enshōji 延勝寺.

40. i.e. “Mahāvairocana, who embodies the complete cognition of the essential nature of the *dharmadhātu*; Akṣobhya (*J.* Fudō butsu 不動佛), who embodies the mirror-like cognition 大圓鏡智; Ratnasambhava (*J.* Hōshō butsu 寶生佛), who embodies the cognition of equality in nature; Amitābha, who embodies the subtle observing cognition, and either Amoghasiddhi (*J.* Fukūjōju butsu 不空成就佛) or Śākyamuni, who embody the cognition with unrestricted activity” (*DDB*).

41. Yokouchi, p. 534.

42. Abé (1999), p. 10.

43. Abé (1999), p. 54-55.

As Shingon Buddhism gained a major foothold at Tōdaiji, dual exoteric-esoteric ceremonies became standard practice, and the Great Buddha, who was treated as Vairocana during Emperor Shōmu's time, gradually assumed the identity of his Shingon doppelgänger, Mahāvairocana. In 960, The Tōdaiji abbot Kōchi 光智 (894-979) petitioned to the emperor for twenty monks to perform prayers for the country at the newly constructed Sonshōin 尊勝院, a subtemple and center of Kegon studies at Tōdaiji. According to the *Tōdaiji yoroku*, “During the day, [the monks] performed readings of the *Sutra of Benevolent Kings* (*Ninnōgyō* 仁王經) and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Hannya haramitta kyō* 般若波羅蜜多經); during the night, they chanted the mantras for the Buddhōṣṇīṣa (Sonshō 尊勝),<sup>44</sup> Mahāvairocana, Bhaiṣajyaguru (Yakushi 藥師), Avalokiteśvara (Kannon 觀音), the Prolongation of Life (*enmyō* 延命), and Acala (Fudō 不動).” Regarding these dual exoteric-esoteric rites, Kōchi says:

In the beginning, Kegon (i.e. study of the *Avataṃsaka Sutra*) was [the primary doctrine studied by] the monks who resided at the [Sonshō]in. Kegon expresses the essence of Mahāvairocana, and includes the [Ten] Vows of Samantabhadra.<sup>45</sup> [These] perfectly interfused principles [of exoteric and esoteric Buddhism] are exceedingly deep and difficult to fathom.<sup>46</sup>

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44. The image of Śākyamuni Buddha in the third chamber of the Womb World Mandala, where he has the form of a wheel-turning king (*J. tenrin'ō*) 轉輪王 who rules the universe (*DDB*).

45. “The ten vows made by Samantabhadra 普賢, as given in the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* (*Kegonkyō* 華嚴經): (1) to worship Buddhas 禮敬諸佛, (2) to praise Tathāgatas 稱讚如來, (3) to make offerings 廣修供養, (4) to repent sin 懺悔業障, (5) to rejoice in the merits attained by others 隨喜功德, (6) to ask the Buddha to teach 請轉法輪, (7) to ask buddhas to stay in the world 請佛住世, (8) to follow buddhas for study 常隨佛學, (9) to be friends with all beings 恆順衆生, and (10) to devote his merits to the salvation of others 普皆迴向” (*DDB*).

46. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 532.



As part of the opening ceremonies for the Sonshōin, Kōchi also summoned “Mahāvairocana; all the Buddhas of the past, present and future in the ten directions; and the deities of heaven and earth” to bless the grounds of the temple.<sup>47</sup> Thus, even while Kōchi maintained his predilection for Kegon studies, he described Kegon in terms of its complementarity with the teachings of Mahāvairocana from Esoteric texts. By Kōchi’s time, there is a high probability that the Great Buddha was already treated as Mahāvairocana, at least for certain ritual purposes.

The Great Buddha was repeatedly treated as Mahāvairocana over the centuries until Chōgen’s time. For example, in 1102, the three senior administrators (*sangō* 三綱)<sup>48</sup> of Tōdaiji authorized the use of the Nagaya Estate 長屋庄園 in Yamato Province 大和国 to fund multi-day repentance rituals at the Great Buddha Hall dedicated to Mahāvairocana. At that time, the abbot of Tōdaiji was Yōkan 永観 (1033-1111), who studied a mixture of Shingon and Madhyamaka (Sanron 三論) at the Tōnan’in 東南院, another prominent Tōdaiji

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47. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 532.

48. These are the three highest ranking positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the temple and includes the abbot.

subtemple. Thus, both the heads of the Sonshōin and the Tōnan'in apparently favored the identification of the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana.<sup>49</sup>

As with the previous Tōdaiji administrators – Kūkai, Kōchi, and Yōkan – Chōgen organized performances of dual exoteric-esoteric rituals for the Great Buddha Hall, while acknowledging the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana, as previously mentioned in the *ganmon* prayer for the consecration of the Great Buddha in 1185. Another text, the *Great Buddha Hall Repentance of Transgressions* (*Daibutsuden keka* 大仏殿悔過, copied 1691), contains a postscript that mentions “multi-day repentances for the Great Buddha Hall... [that] were started in the third year of the Kenkyū Era,” i.e. 1192. During this period, Chōgen was still constructing the hall, and probably helped to organize the event. This text's section on “chanting according to the teaching” (*nyohō nenju* 如法念誦) recommends “homage to the power of the mantra (*shingon*) that protects this temple,” which shows that Chōgen definitively viewed Tōdaiji's central deity through the lens of Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>50</sup>

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49. Yokouchi, p. 532. Yet another example of the penetration of Mahāvairocana ideology at Tōdaiji concerns one of the temple's estates, Ushirogawa 後河, in Tanba Province 丹波国. In 1055 the Tanba provincial governor ordered his representatives to seize the estate. Because there was no precedent for the use of such authority on part of the governor, the estate workers rebelled and Tōdaiji filed an official complaint. The *Heian ibun* 平安遺文 records several instances in which the estate workers challenged the governor by asserting that Mahāvairocana had owned the estates and paid wages to the workers for three or four hundred years, using Mahāvairocana as a substitute for the temple's authority. The development of the Ushiragawa Estate was first mentioned in documents from 950, which coincided with Kōchi's designation of properties to fund the construction of the Sonshō'in, so there may be a connection (Yokouchi, p. 533).

50. Yokouchi, p. 531.

*Layout of the Great Buddha Hall and the “Three Mysteries”*

Chōgen’s understanding of the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana was supplemented by his arrangement of other statues and Buddhist artworks installed in the Great Buddha Hall. A diagram of the hall (*Tōdaiji daibutsuden zu* 東大寺大仏殿図) dated to 1284 from Daigoji shows the hall’s layout from this period.<sup>51</sup> On top of the Great Buddha’s lotus pedestal, two tabernacles were erected to the east and west: the Womb World Hall (Taizōkaidō 胎藏界堂) and Diamond World Hall (Kongōkaidō 金剛界堂). These tabernacles housed the *Diamond World Mandala* and *Womb World Mandala*, respectively, along with the portraits of the eight Esoteric masters of the Shingon school, which were probably evenly distributed between the two.<sup>52</sup> Two flanking-attendant statues of Ākāśagarbha (Kokuzō 虛空藏) and Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara (Nyoirin kannon 如意輪觀音) were also placed to either side of the Great Buddha. Finally, statues of the Four Heavenly Kings<sup>53</sup> from the *Golden Light Sutra* surrounded the altar at each corner.

Each of these features possess their own significances, but together, they comprise an even deeper expression of Shingon thought. The key to understanding Chōgen’s arrangement

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51. See Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan (2012), n. 10.

52. Fujii Keisuke 藤井恵介 alternatively argues, based on the *Tōdaiji gusho* 東大寺具書, that the Womb World Hall and Diamond World Hall did not house actual copies of the *Mandalas of the Two Worlds*, but only copies of the portraits of the eight Esoteric masters. Rather, the names of the two halls derived from the fact that the Great Buddha should itself be viewed as the *Womb World Mandala* or *Diamond World Mandala* from the perspective of each hall (Keisuke, p. 283-284). For the purpose of my arguments here, though, it is not crucial to determine whether the *Mandalas of the Two Worlds* were actually installed in the two halls, or their existence was implied.

53. The Four Heavenly Kings are (1) Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Jikokuten 持國天), (2) Virūḍhaka 增長天 (Zojōten), (3) Virūpākṣa (Kōmokuten 廣目天), and (4) Vaiśravaṇa (Tamonten 多聞天).

of the Great Buddha Hall is the doctrine of the “three mysteries” (*S. trighya*, *J. sanmitsu* 三密), the secret language of the *dharmakāya*’s body, speech, and mind, which expresses his enlightenment. Because Mahāvairocana’s body encompasses the entirety of space-time, the unfolding of events in the past, present, and future across the universe are equivalent to the communication of his actions, words, and thoughts, if understood from an enlightened perspective.<sup>54</sup> Because sentient beings in their normal state are deluded by desire (*rāga*), anger (*dveṣa*), and delusion (*moha*), they are unable to comprehend Mahāvairocana’s message. However, according to the *Mahāvairocana Sutra*, his body, speech, and mind can be replicated through gestural sequences of mudras, recitations of mantras, and visualizations of mandalic images. These component gestures, recitations, and visualizations can be thought of as “words,” each of which represents an aspect of the Buddha’s enlightened mind (*bodhicitta*). When a practitioner reproduces a particular deity’s mudra, recites the deity’s mantra, or visualizes the deity’s image, she strings these “words” together to form “statements” that in turn convey the meaning of the Buddha’s enlightenment. The reproduction of the Buddha’s enlightened thought through three mysteries practice is described as accelerating the practitioner’s spiritual progress, making possible the attainment of enlightenment in this very existence.<sup>55</sup>

The layout of Chōgen’s Great Buddha Hall represented the three mysteries of body, mind, and speech in a tangible form. The Great Buddha statue itself represented the mystery

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54. In other words, enlightenment is already always at hand in the world.

55. Abé (1999), p. 129-131. A comprehensive explanation of three mysteries practice is beyond the confines of this thesis, but for a fuller treatment, see Abé (1999), p. 127-149.

of body – the actions of Mahāvairocana, reproducible through his mudra. The *Mandala of the Two Worlds* set on either side of the Great Buddha represented the mystery of mind – the universe as seen from the enlightened perspective, achieved by visualizing the deities that emanate from Mahāvairocana in the two mandala. The choice of the flanking-attendant statues on either side of the Great Buddha were also taken from the *Mandala of the Two Worlds*. Ākāśagarbha (Kokūzō 虛空藏) is the central bodhisattva of the *Hall of Space* (Kokūzōin 虛空藏院) in the *Womb World Mandala*, while Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara (Nyoirin kannon) is the central bodhisattva in the *Hall of the Lotus Section* (Rengebu'in 蓮華部院).<sup>56</sup> Ākāśagarbha and Avalokiteśvara express Mahāvairocana's wisdom and compassion, the two core ideas represented by the *Diamond World Mandala* and *Womb World Mandala*.

The material instantiation of the mystery of speech is less apparent in the organization of the hall, but can be found in the Four Guardian King statues. In order to understand this, we must return to the multi-day recitations of the *Golden Light Sutra and ceremonies for the Two Worlds* organized by Chōgen in each of the tabernacles. Chōgen mentions these rites in his *Sazenshū*, and according to the *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki*:

[In the Great Buddha] Hall from long ago exoteric-esoteric rites were always mixed together.... Therefore, in the Great Buddha Hall, for several days, twelve purified Shingon monks performed a ceremony of the Two Worlds (兩部之法), and thirty exoteric monks of great virtue delivered lectures on the *Golden Light Sutra*. [These ceremonies were performed] for the stability of the court, the longevity of the emperor, peace between the warrior clans, the prosperity of the Kantō 関東 region, the tranquility of the four seas, and the happiness of the common people.<sup>57</sup>

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56. For further details regarding the composition of these mandalas, see Grotenhuis, p. 33-95.

57. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 529.

Rites for the *Golden Light Sutra* were essential at Tōdaiji since Emperor Shōmu founded the institution as the national headquarters for the network of provincial temples (*kokubunji* 国分寺), which were charged with monthly ritual performances dedicated to the Four Guardian Kings who appear in the *Sutra* as vessels for the protection of the state.<sup>58</sup> The official name for the network of provincial temples was inspired by the sutra itself, “*The Temples for Protection of the State by the Four Heavenly Kings of the Golden Light Sutra*” (金光明經四天王護国之寺). Chōgen’s version of the rites, unlike those from Shōmu’s time, were based on Kūkai’s Esoteric reinterpretation of the sutra in his *Homage to the Secret of the Golden Light Sutra*. According to that interpretation, the *dhāraṇī* of the Four Guardian Kings in the *Sutra* should be understood as Esoteric mantra to be recited according to the practice of the mystery of speech. The statues of the Four Guardian Kings in the Great Buddha Hall served as an embodiment of that practice. Holistically, Chōgen’s novel design for the Great Buddha Hall represented the three mysteries central to the Shingon understanding of Buddhist practice.

Chōgen’s reification of the identity of the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana and his decision to “esotericize” the Great Buddha Hall were reinforced by exhibiting the portraits of the eight Esoteric Masters who allegedly transmitted Shingon Buddhism across East Asia, displayed in the tabernacles for the *Womb World* and *Diamond World Mandalas*. Kūkai became the eighth and final master in this lineage. Because the Esoteric sutras are preached by the cosmic Buddha, Mahāvairocana, the Shingon lineage begins with (1) Mahāvairocana, and includes (2) Vajrasattva (Kongōsatta 金剛薩埵), Mahāvairocana’s interlocutor in the

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58. Abé (1999), p. 38.

*Mahāvairocana Sutra*; (3) Nāgārjuna (Ryōju 龍樹, *ca.* 2nd-3rd c.), the Indian founder of the Mādhyamaka school; (4) Nāgabodhi (Ryūchi 龍智, *ca.* 8th c.), Nāgārjuna’s alleged disciple; (5) Vajrabodhi (Kongōchi 金剛智, 671–741), an Indian translator of Esoteric texts into Chinese; (6) Amoghavajra (Fukū kongō 不空金剛, 705-774), a Central Asian monk and translator; (7) Huiguo (746–806), Kūkai’s Chinese master; and finally, (8) Kūkai (774–835).<sup>59</sup> This lineage traced the path of Buddhism from its origin with Mahāvairocana through India, China, and Japan, lending authenticity to Chōgen, his Shingon School, and his design choices for the layout of the Great Buddha Hall.

#### *The Great Buddha as Amitābha*

Chōgen’s Esoteric additions to the Great Buddha Hall left few doubts concerning the identity of the Great Buddha, and were also important for establishing a connection between the statue and Amitābha, the central Buddha worshipped in Chōgen’s Pure Land activities. Chōgen’s design for the statue made this connection easier to imagine, since the form of the statue was generic, and could represent almost any Buddha. A copy of a drawing of the statue now held at the Chūsei’in 中性院 at Tōdaiji provides frontal, profile, and three-quarters views, confirming that Chōgen’s statue was similar to the current iteration, which was completed in 1691.<sup>60</sup> Features common to tathāgata statues were all present – the fleshy protuberance on the crown (*S. uṣṇīṣa*, *J. nikukei* 肉髻); the coils of hair on the head (*rahotsu* 螺髮); the curl between the eyebrows (*S. ūrṇā*, *J. byakugō* 白毫); the brows arched like a

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59. Abé (1999), p. 129.

60. See Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan (2012), n. 10.

crescent moon (眉如初月); the long, rounded earlobes (耳輪垂); the three wrinkles across the neck, and the robe draped over both shoulders revealing an unadorned chest. These features are present in most statues of Vairocana, Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Bhaiṣajyaguru, etc., as well.<sup>61</sup>

However, the Great Buddha statue lacked any of the features that distinguish images of Mahāvairocana created during the late Heian and early Kamakura Periods. These images usually depicted Mahāvairocana's hair tied in a topknot and his head adorned with a crown. He also usually wore a necklace and bracelets around his arms, wrists, and ankles. Since the Great Buddha statue lacked these characteristics, a simple inspection of the statue alone would have yielded no clues that it depicted Mahāvairocana.

Moreover, the Great Buddha did not form the mudras commonly associated with Mahāvairocana. In statuary, Mahāvairocana is often depicted performing the “knowledge fist mudra” (*chiken'in* 智拳印), where the left hand is clenched except for the raised forefinger, which is grasped by the closed first of the right hand. This mudra is associated with the sixth of the nine groups in the *Diamond World Mandala*, the “Single Mudra Assembly” (*ichiin'e* 一印會),<sup>62</sup> and represents either the one dharma realm, or the wisdom of the “dharma ocean”<sup>63</sup> grasped by the Buddha.<sup>64</sup> Another, less commonly featured mudra of

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61. Though Bhaiṣajyaguru may carry a medicine bottle as a distinguishing characteristic.

62. Mahāvairocana also performs this mudra in the Four Mudra Assembly, the Perfected Body Assembly, etc. of the *Diamond World Mandala*.

63. Where “dharma ocean” (*hōkai* 法海) is a metaphor for the Buddha's teachings.

64. “智拳印.” *FXDCD*.



Mahāvairocana used in statuary is the “dharma realm meditation mudra” (*hōkai join* 法界定印), in which both hands are placed in the lap, with the palms turned upward, right hand on top of left, and thumbs touching. This mudra is associated with the *Hall of the Central Dias Eight Petals* of the *Womb World Mandala*, and represented Mahāvairocana’s meditation.<sup>65</sup> The Great Buddha formed neither of these mudras. Instead, the statue formed the “bestowing fearlessness and wish-granting mudra” (*semui yogan’in* 施無畏与願印), in which the right hand is held in front of the chest with the fingers extended, and the left hand rests on the left knee with the palm turned upward.<sup>66</sup> This mudra, like the rest of the statue, is thoroughly generic. It was so widely used for images of Śākyamuni, Maitreya, Amoghasiddhi, Bhaiṣajyaguru, and Amitābha, etc. that it became known as the “form common to Buddhas” (*tsubutsuzō* 通仏相).<sup>67</sup> Thus, a medieval viewer would not have been able to distinguish the Great Buddha as Mahāvairocana by the statue’s mudra, either.

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65. While use of the meditation mudra was more common in Buddhist images across other parts of Asia, in Japan the mudra was not usually featured in images of Amitābha or other Buddhas. In later times, the Zen School favored images of Śākyamuni performing a meditation mudra, but the position of the hands was reversed. After the Kamakura Period, there were also a few instances of Maitreya and other Buddhas who featured the meditation mudra, but these postdate Chōgen’s period by centuries (*JAANUS*, “法界定印”).

66. The diagram of the Great Buddha from Chūsei’in shows that the positions of the hands of Chōgen’s statue were almost identical to the current statue that dates from the Edo Period. The positions of the hands in the frontal and profile views in the diagram are slightly different, but the mudra formed appears to be the same (see Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed., 2012, n. 28). Also, studies of the Great Buddha statue have confirmed that the folds of the sleeves and parts of the Buddha’s hands still incorporate fragments from the previous statues, suggesting that the current hand positions match those from Chōgen’s day (see Rosenfield, figure 70, p. 102).

67. “施無畏印,” *JAANUS*.

The indistinguishability of the Great Buddha statue made Chōgen's aforementioned ideological claim about the unity of Mahāvairocana and Amitābha all the more plausible. Depending on the viewer's perspective, the statue could represent Mahāvairocana, or it could represent any of the Buddhas said to be generated by him in the Womb World or Diamond World, of which Amitābha was both a member. Chōgen's inclusion of the *Mandalas of the Two Worlds* on either side of the Great Buddha reinforced the tenability of this interpretation.

### **Other Buddhist statues created for Tōdaiji**

From the early 1190's, a number of Buddhist statues were created for the interior and exterior of the Tōdaiji halls. Unlike the reconstruction of Kōfukuji during this period, the Kyoto-based In and En schools (*enpa* 円派) of sculptors were generally not employed at Tōdaiji. Apart from the mandorla, the only Buddhist sculptor from those schools responsible for a statue in the Main Lecture Hall (*daikōdō* 大講堂) was Injitsu 院実 (late 12th-13th c.), who created an Ākāśagarbha (Kokūzō bosatsu 虚空蔵菩薩) statue long after Chōgen's time, in 1256. Otherwise, In and En school representatives were noticeably unrepresented. One reason for this may stem from a rumor that the sculptor Inson 院尊 (1120-1198) carved a statue of Vaiśravaṇa (Bishamonten 毘沙門天) in 1181-1182 that was dedicated at a temple in Ōmi-Takashima 近江高島 for the purpose of defeating the Minamoto in the Gempei War, prompting Yoritomo's wrath. However, this reason would not explain the decision to ignore sculptors from the En School, as well. Another possibility is that the sculptural style of the Kyoto-based schools did not match Chōgen's tastes. Chōgen preferred Song styles of art and architecture, apparent in the Great Buddha style employed at the Tōdaiji Great South Gate, which remains today. Thus, it seems natural that he would privilege the recently introduced

Chinese styles of statuary he observed in the Southern Song over those employed by the Kyoto schools, which continued to base their works on those of Jōchō 定朝 (?-1057) from more than a century before. For many of the statues Chōgen commissioned, including the statues of Amitābha still extant from the Harima and Iga bessho, as well as statues of Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk (Sōgyō hachiman shin zazō 僧形八幡神坐像, 1201)<sup>68</sup> and Amitābha at the Tōdaiji Shunjōdō 俊乗堂, Chōgen employed the sculptor Kaikei of the Kei school (*keiha* 慶派), based in Nara. Altogether, several representatives of the Kei school worked for Chōgen at Tōdaiji, including Kaikei, Jōkaku 定覚 (?-?), Unkei 運慶 (?-1223), Kōkei 康慶 (?-?), and Tankei 湛慶 (1173-1256).<sup>69</sup>

In 1194, the Kei sculptors began work on statues of Vaiśravaṇa (Tamonten 多聞天)<sup>70</sup> and Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Jikokuten 持国天) for the Middle South Gate (*nanchūmon* 南中門) of Tōdaiji. Kaikei and forty apprentices from his atelier assumed responsibility for the Vaiśravaṇa statue, while Jōkaku and thirty apprentices took charge of the Dhṛtarāṣṭra statue. In the same year, Yoritomo ordered eight vassals (*gokenin* 御家人) to oversee the creation of two *rokujō* flanking-attendant statues (*kyōji*, *wakiji* 脇侍) and Four Guardian King (Shitennō 四天王) statues for the Great Buddha Hall. Such orders came with the implicit understanding that his vassals also assume responsibility for the financial burdens involved. Production of the flanking-attendant statues began in 1196 by Kaikei and Jōkaku.

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68. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 1, p. 248-255.

69. Iwata, p. 14-15.

70. Tamonten and Bishamonten are both names for Vaiśravaṇa in Japanese.

Chōgen also employed Chinese stonemasons for the manufacture of statues at Tōdaiji.

According to the *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki* 東大寺造立供養記 (1198):

In the 7th Year of the Kenkyū 建久 Era (1196), the stone lion [statues] for the Middle Gate, the stone flanking attendants<sup>71</sup> for the interior of the [Great Buddha] Hall, and the Four Heavenly King statues for the same hall were created by Liulang 六郎 and other Chinese (stonemasons) numbering four (altogether). Since Japanese stone is difficult to work with, emissaries were sent directly to China to purchase [some]. [The stone] transported in various ways altogether amounted to more than 3,000 *koku*.<sup>72</sup>

建久七年。中門石獅々[子]。堂内石脇士。同四天像。宋人字六郎等四人造之。若日本國石難造。貴價直於大唐所買來也。運賃雜用等凡三千餘石也。

The identity of the Chinese stone masons who worked with Chōgen can be identified from several sources. Yi Xingmo 伊行末 (*ca.* 1160-1260), who originally hailed from Ningbo, built the stone foundation for the Great Buddha Hall, as well as the stone lions mentioned in the record above, which still exist at Tōdaiji (Figure 18).<sup>73</sup> His son, Yi Xingji 伊行吉, seems to have worked with his father on these projects, and later built two stone pillars dedicated to his parents at Hannya-ji 般若寺 outside Nara.<sup>74</sup> The two stone attendant

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71. These appear to be two Avalokiteśvara statues installed in corners of the Great Buddha Hall rather than true “flanking-attendant” statues. See diagram reprinted in Rosenfield, p. 21.

72. Reprinted in Yamakawa, p. 104. A *koku* is a measure of volume or a boat’s carrying capacity. If used as a unit of volume, 1 *koku*  $\cong$  180ℓ, therefore 3000 *koku*  $\cong$  540,000ℓ. If used as a unit of a boat’s capacity, 1 *koku*  $\cong$  .278 m<sup>3</sup>, therefore 3000 *koku*  $\cong$  834 m<sup>3</sup>. Either way, this seems to be an excessive amount of stone, and probably a gross exaggeration.

73. The stone lions are notable for an ornate band of floral designs carved around the breasts of the statues that include peonies and lotus flowers, while assorted cloud patterns are inscribed on their bases.

74. Rosenfield, p. 123.



Figure 18. *Stone Lion*. One of a pair. Yi Xingmo 伊行末. Prior to 1203. Great South Gate, Tōdaiji, Nara. Reprinted from Rosenfield, no. 89, p. 122.

statues and the Four Heavenly King statues for the Great Buddha Hall are no longer extant,<sup>75</sup> but were probably sculpted by Yi Xingmo and his team, as well. Another member of the Yi clan is mentioned on a stone stele inscription uncovered in 1993 from Sayama Reservoir 狭山池 in Ōsaka Prefecture. That stele, described in more detail later in this chapter, was originally erected in 1202 on the occasion of Chōgen's repair of the reservoir. The stele lists the participants in the project, which include the “Tōdaiji head craftsman Yi Shi” (造東大寺大工伊勢) and three Chinese masons responsible for the carving the stele itself, including the “head craftsman Shou Bao” (造唐人三人之内 大工守保). Yi Shi was probably a relative of Yi Xingmo and Yi Xingji given the identity of their surnames.<sup>76</sup> The reading of the latter head craftsman's name is uncertain – it may refer to his original Chinese name, “Shou Bao,” or more likely, a Japanese alias, “Moriyasu.” In any case, the stone used for the stele was hewn from an imported continental variety, and the date of the inscription is only six years after the *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki* notes Chinese stone was imported for statues at Tōdaiji. Thus, the probability is high that the three Chinese stonemasons mentioned on the Sayama Stele are three of the four listed in the *kuyōki* as the carvers of the Tōdaiji statues.<sup>77</sup>

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75. The statues are mentioned in the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, where their heights are listed as eight *shaku* 尺, or about 2.4 m.

76. The Yi “school” of stonemasons continued to be active at least through the 14th century, though some later descendants used for their surname the alternative character *jing* 井, which is a homophone of *yi* 伊 in Japanese, where both can be read “*ino*.”

77. Yamakawa, 104-105.

The open-mouthed (*agyō* 阿形) and closed-mouthed (*ungyō* 吽形)<sup>78</sup> Vajra-wielding Guardians (Kongō rikishi 金剛力士)<sup>79</sup> at the Great South Gate (Nandaimon 南大門) (Figures 19 and 20) were completed in 1203 according to inscriptions on the statues. The open-mouthed statue is thought to be a collaboration between Kaikei and Unkei, and the closed-mouthed one a collaboration between Jōkaku and Tankei. These Vajra-wielding Guardians statues differed from previous examples sculpted in Japan in several ways: the relative positions of the statues were reversed (in the case of Tōdaiji the open-mouthed statue appears on the West side and the closed-mouth statue on the East), their hand gestures and implements were unprecedented, and the statues were installed inside the gate rather than in front of it. These differences can be traced to Song influences. When the Great South Gate guardian statues are compared to the *Song Transformation Painting of Vulture Peak* (*Ryōzen hensō zu* 靈山變相図) (Figure 21) brought from China in 986 by the monk Chōnen and inserted into the famous Seiryōji 清涼寺 Śākyamuni statue,<sup>80</sup> the positions of the two Vajra-wielding guardians, their hand gestures, and implements all match, showing that the Tōdaiji statues were probably based on a similar painting. The two Tōdaiji statues were completed and installed at the Great South Gate just in time for the third dedication ceremony in 1203, this time for the entire temple. The original sponsors of the Tōdaiji reconstruction – Go-

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78. “A” and “un” in Japanese are transliterations of the Sanskrit letters “a” and “hūṃ,” the first and last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. They have many symbolic references, particularly in Esoteric Buddhism, where they represent the beginning and the end of all things. The two sounds are often represented in statuary by a pair of open- and closed-mouthed statues, since the letter “a” is formed by an open mouth and “un” by a closed one.

79. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 2, p. 13-51.

80. See Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. (2006), n. 58.





Figure 19. *Open-mouthed Vajra-wielding Guardian*. Unkei 運慶 and Kaikei 快慶. Bundled woodblock construction. 1203. Great South Gate, Tōdaiji, Nara. Reprinted from Rosenfield, no. 102, p. 142.





Figure 20. *Closed-mouthed Vajra-wielding Guardian*. Jōkaku 定覺 and Tankei 湛慶. Bundled woodblock construction. 1203. Great South Gate, Tōdaiji, Nara. Reprinted from Rosenfield, no. 103, p. 143.





Figure 21. *Song Transformation Painting of Vulture Peak*. 1 Sheet. Northern Song Dynasty (10th c.) Seiryōji 清涼寺, Kyoto. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin chōgen*, no. 58, p. 109.

Shirakawa, Yoritomo, and Yuktaka – did not live to witness that day, and rebuilding of the temple’s Eastern pagoda and other minor structures would continue after Chōgen’s death in 1206.<sup>81</sup>

### **Forceful requisition of estates**

Much of the thought concerning Chōgen’s *kanjin* campaign has revolved around his charisma and good works projects, which benefitted the sponsors of the Tōdaiji reconstruction and local communities near the Tōdaiji estates. However, Chōgen’s campaign was also enabled by the authorities’ implicit, and sometimes explicit, coercion directed toward subjects “invited” to contribute to the campaign. Chōgen’s *kanjin* campaign was on a much larger scope than any attempted in Japan before, and involved almost every region of the country in addition to human resources and technologies from the continent. In order to guarantee the scheduled delivery of revenues and raw materials for the temple’s reconstruction, the cooperation of provincial governors and local landholders was necessary, and often depended on intervention from the central authorities.<sup>82</sup>

Chōgen’s *kanjin* campaign was similar in some respects to the rebuilding of Zenkōji 善光寺, also sponsored by Yoritomo. After Zenkōji burned down in 1179, an edict was published in 1187 requesting financial assistance from the owners of estates in Shinano Province 信濃国 for the temple’s reconstruction. The contents of the edict stated that each estate proprietor in the province should contribute to the *kanjin* campaign, and warned that

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81. Iwata, p. 14-15.

82. Yokouchi, p. 538.

should there be a lack of cooperation, estates would be forcefully seized in order to meet the campaign's financial goals. The edict applied not only to the class of shogunal vassals (*gokenin* 御家人), but also the acting provincial governor (*kōryō* 公領). Chōgen's campaign depended on similar threats of force from the shogun and the retired emperor. In order to insure his estates ran smoothly, Chōgen received an edict from Yoritomo ordering the *jitō* land stewards to cease tax collection on Tōdaiji estates in eastern provinces near the new capital of Kamakura where Yoritomo had loyal vassals. In the Western Provinces, where Yoritomo lacked vassals, Go-Shirakawa probably issued a separate edict to provincial officials.<sup>83</sup>

Left without alternatives, shogunal vassals were compelled to finance many aspects of the Tōdaiji reconstruction. In 1193 following the death of Go-Shirakawa, Yoritomo continued to press estate managers in all of the western circuits to balance their duties in order to carry out the *kanjin* campaign. The donations they contributed helped to finance the flanking statues and four guardian kings created for the Great Buddha Hall. In 1194, monks' alms and rice offerings used in the ceremony to commemorate the Great Buddha Hall were contributed following demands by the shogunate.<sup>84</sup> Even the success of some of Chōgen's "good works" projects depended on orders from the shogun. For example, the reconstruction of Uozumi harbor, which benefitted local fisherman near the Harima bessho, only proceeded after an edict requesting: (1) one *koku* of rice from each estate in all provinces of the three circuits, (2) one boat each from the same estates for transportation of raw materials, (3)

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83. Yokouchi, p. 545-546.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 545-547.

lumber from the five provinces under Yamashiro Province 山城国, and (4) the requisition of workers from Settsu, Harima, and Awaji 淡路 Provinces. In each of these cases, materials and goods owned by private estates were converted into public property through forced contributions that functioned as one-time taxes. Because the contributions were managed by the office of the *kanjin hijiri*, from another angle they were also religiously sanctioned, and thus simultaneously legitimated by both secular and divine authorities.<sup>85</sup>

Chōgen confronted much opposition to his plans to develop estates for the Tōdaiji reconstruction from provincial officials, and required the central authorities to mediate in different ways. Initially, he requested the government's protection for estates that had been loaned to Tōdaiji, but whose ownership was never officially transferred. One such example was the Bizen estate, which originally belonged to Go-Shirakawa, but was inherited by Fujiwara Yūkitaka and loaned to Tōdaiji in order to supply lamp oil. While Yūkitaka was still alive, prohibitions were issued against interference with Chōgen's development of the estate.<sup>86</sup> However, after Yūkitaka died, ownership of the estate was transferred to his son, who opposed Chōgen's activities. In the end, Chōgen was forced to cede control of the estate to its legitimate heirs.<sup>87</sup>

Frustrated by this episode, Chōgen sought a new strategy to secure the longterm viability of the other Tōdaiji estates by obtaining direct control over their management. Some estates, such as Ōbe and Fushino no sho, already belonged to Tōdaiji. However, for

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85. *Ibid.*, p. 550-551.

86. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 283-285.

87. Yokouchi, p. 554-555.

others, such as the Iga and Miyano estates, Chōgen requested that their rights be listed under the name of Chen Heqing, his Chinese confidant and technical advisor, thereby avoiding interference from other potential claimants. In his later years, Chōgen even took steps to exclude Chen by obtaining letters from Go-Toba that acknowledged his personal property rights over the estates. In his will, Chōgen was able to bestow the estates under his control to heirs of his own choosing.<sup>88</sup> While Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign was not the first to depend on the intervention of the emperor or shogun, Chōgen was the first *kanjin hijiri* to wield substantial economic power that matched that of a provincial governor.<sup>89</sup>

### **The scope of Chōgen's activities in the *Sazenshū***

How many of Chōgen's activities during his later life were specifically connected with the *kanjin* campaign to rebuild Tōdaiji? Chōgen's *Sazenshū*, which lists Chōgen's most consequential achievements, shows that the majority of his recorded activities related to Tōdaiji and the *bessho*. The *Sazenshū* records temples to which Chōgen donated Buddhist statues, as well as the identities of those statues' deities. Generally speaking, the text can be divided into two halves: first, the "Tōdaiji" section that concerns activities related to Tōdaiji, Daigoji (Chōgen's ordination temple), and the seven *bessho*; and second, the "miscellaneous" section that concerns Chōgen's good works in other places.

The "Tōdaiji" section lists achievements at the following institutions: (1) the *Tōzen'in* 唐禪院, a lecture hall originally constructed by Ganjin (C. *Jianzhen* 鑑真, 688-763) when he

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88. *Ibid.*, p. 556-558.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 560-561.

stayed at Tōdaiji in the mid-8th century; (2) Hokkeiji 法華寺, the head of the Kokubun state nunneries 国分尼寺 and built as a complement to Tōdaiji by Empress Kōmyō 光明 (701-760); (3) Daigoji, Chōgen's Shingon ordination temple in Kyōto, founded in 874 with the assistance of Shōbō 聖宝;<sup>90</sup> (4) Kayanomori 栢杜, a sanctuary affiliated with Daigoji; and finally, (5) Hachiman shrines (八幡宮), dedicated to the *kami* of war, who served as the protector divinity of Tōdaiji. Historically, the most important Hachiman branch-shrine, Tamukeyama hachimangū 手向山八幡宮, was built near Tōdaiji, where it was also destroyed by Taira no Shigehira in the Gempei War. Apart from the temples and shrines listed above, the institutions mentioned in the “Tōdaiji” section were affiliated with Chōgen's *bessho*.<sup>91</sup>

The “miscellaneous” section of the *Sazenshū* deals with accomplishments that defy simple classification, as well as lists of raw materials Chōgen used for his construction projects. Chōgen may have begun writing the *Sazenshū* as a list of deeds performed during the construction of Tōdaiji, and then later composed the “miscellaneous” section as a remembrance of deeds from early in his life, followed by uncategorized deeds not included in the previous section. This would explain the lack of chronological sequence in the document, which discusses Chōgen's teenage years after discussing his achievements at Tōdaiji. In any case, Chōgen's accomplishments in the “miscellaneous” section can be summarized as follows:

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90. Shōbō went on to found the Tōnan'in a year later, which became a sub-temple of Tōdaiji. Monks from Daigoji often traveled to the Tōnan'in in order to study about the Three Treatise school (Sanron 三論) of Buddhism (Oka, p. 6-7.) The two temples also exchanged abbots, as seen during Chōgen's own lifetime in the cases of Shōken and Jōhan, two of Chōgen's disciples.

91. *Sazenshū*. In Kobayashi, p. 482-489. Also see Oka, p. 4-5.

(1) Introduced a repentance rite (*senbō* 懺法) at Daigoji involving the silent reading (of sutras) for the six periods of the day<sup>92</sup> lasting one thousand days; commemorated new copies of the *Lotus Sutra*; as a teenager, practiced mountain and forest austerities<sup>93</sup> and copied sutras; and provided timbers (for the repair of the Relic Hall at) Ayuwangshan in Mingzhou 明州 (Ningbo), China.

(2) Provided three central pillars (*shinbashira* 心柱) for the five-story pagoda at Kōfukuji 興福寺.

(3) Provided copies of the Greater *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* for Kasuga Shrine 春日社.

(4) Held two commemoration ceremonies for relics at Shitennōji 四天王寺 and organized multiple recitations of Amitābha Buddha's name one-million times (*hyakuman ben* 百万遍)<sup>94</sup> at this temple's West Gate.

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92. The “six periods of the day” refers to all hours of the day and night. It was sometimes written as the “six periods of the day and night” (*chūya rokuji* 晝夜六時). The 24-hour day was divided into the three daytime periods of early morning (*tenchō* 展朝), midday (*nicchū* 日中), and sunset (*nichibotsu* 日没), along with the three nighttime periods of early evening (*shoya* 初夜), midnight (*chūya* 中夜), and late night (*goya* 後夜). The custom of six time periods existed in India, and during the Tang, Shandao 善導 created the six periods of worship (*C. liushi lizan, J. rokuji raisan* 六時禮讚); the Chinese Tiantai school (天台宗) practiced the constant ambulation *samādhi* during each of the six periods (*DDB*).

93. Here, Chōgen describes his practice as *dhūta* (*tosō* 抖擻). The original Indic term meant to cast off, shake off, or cleanse. In the Buddhist context, the term refers to the removal of attachments through ascetic practices designed to eliminate one's desire for food, clothing, and shelter (*DDB*).

94. This term is an abbreviation of “the one-million recitations of the *nembutsu*” (*J. hyakuman ben nembutsu* 百萬遍念佛). Repeating Amitābha's name a million times over a period of seven days ensured rebirth in his Pure Land. The practice is explained in the *Soapberry Sutra* (*J. Mokugenshikyō* 木槲子經), which says that if one is mindful of the names of the Buddha, dharma, and sangha one million times, one can remove the one-hundred eight afflictive karmas (*J. hyakuhachi ketsugyō* 百八結業), and proceed to nirvana. According to Jiakai's 迦才 *Treatise on the Pure Land* (*C. Jingtulun* 淨土論), Daochuo 道綽 followed this practice. The practice became popular in Japan during the Heian period (*DDB*).



(5) Constructed and held commemoration ceremonies for Tōdaiji, as well as performed other benevolent deeds there.

(6) Performed *kechien* activities for a *jōroku* statue of Maitreya and the Yakushiji 薬師寺 pagoda.

(7) Repaired the *Uozumi no tomari* 魚住泊 harbor first built by Gyōki.

(8) Accomplished benevolent deeds at the Kasagidera Hannya Temple 笠置般若台寺, as well as many other locations.<sup>95</sup>

If a comprehensive list of the location and type of activity Chōgen performed in the “miscellaneous” section is compiled, then the resulting table would appear as Table 1.

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95. Kobayashi, p. 482-494 and Oka, p. 5. The Hannya “Platform” is really a hall for the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* that serves as part of the Kasagidera complex.

**Table 1.** Locations and nature of Chōgen's activities as documented in the Sazenshū and sorted by Nara-affiliations. Reproduced from Oka, p. 7.

	Temple	Image	Pagoda	Facilities	Sutra	Other	Total
Nara Affiliated	Hokkeiji 法華寺		3				3
	Kōfukuji 興福寺		2			1	3
	Tōdaiji Hachiman 八幡社				3		3
	Kasuga 春日				1		1
	Yakushiji 薬師寺	1	1				2
	Kōmyōsan 光明山			1			1
	Kasagidera 笠置寺	1		1	1		3
	Yamato shoji 大和諸寺					1	1
	Subtotal	2	6	2	5	2	17
Semi- Nara Affiliated	Daigoji 醍醐寺				1	1	2
	Kayadō 萱堂	1					1
	Kōya Portrait Hall			1			1
	Koyadera 小矢寺	1					1
	Subtotal	2	0	1	1	1	5
Other	Zenkōji 善光寺	4				1	5
	Tennōji 天王寺		1				1
	Mimanji 弥満寺			1			1
	Nakōji 若王寺				1		1
	Nachi 那智				1		1
	Ōmunesan 大峰山				2		2
	Kumano 熊野				1		1
	Kazuraki 葛木				1		1
	Ise 伊勢神社				3		3
	Subtotal	4	1	1	9	1	16
	Total	8	7	4	15	4	38

Of the thirty-eight activities Chōgen records involving the dedication of images, pagodas, facilities, and sutras, many were also connected with Tōdaiji in some way, if only tangentially: (2) Kōfukuji and (3) Kasuga Shrine were the clan temple and shrine of the Fujiwara, some of whom donated to the Tōdaiji reconstruction; (4) Shitennōji was founded by Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (572-622), with whom Shōmu, the original founder of Tōdaiji, was sometimes identified as a reincarnation; and (5) the commemoration ceremony at Tōdaiji had obvious connections. Of these activities, some of which took place early in Chōgen's life before his involvement with Tōdaiji, 47% have direct links with the temple's reconstruction.

Combining data from the “Tōdaiji” and “miscellaneous” sections, the *Sazenshū* confirms that the great majority of Chōgen’s later life was devoted in some way to Tōdaiji.

### **Pure Land Buddhism at the *bessho***

Integral to the fundraising for Tōdaiji and the establishment of Chōgen’s Pure Land Buddhist vision were his *bessho*, built on many of the estates he managed. These institutions had Pure Land halls where religious services were held on behalf of those who lived, worked, and managed the estates. Chōgen’s first *bessho* was built at Kōyasan before he received the mandate to reconstruct Tōdaiji, but his experiences founding the Pure Land temple there served as the basis for his later *bessho*.

Before the reconstruction of Tōdaiji, “*bessho*” generally referred to secretive hermitages for monks and nuns residing away from their main temples and seeking seclusion in order to progress along their spiritual paths. They also functioned as temporary abodes for wandering *hijiri* traveling through the countryside. From the perspective of the common people who resided near *bessho*, they were a place for making spiritual connections with the resident *hijiri* or deities worshipped there.<sup>96</sup> *Bessho* were sometimes controlled by a home temple and served as branch temples, while other times they functioned relatively independently. Both patterns of interaction were known by 1060. Examples of *bessho* from the period include the Kurodani *bessho* 黒谷別所 founded by Hōnen on Hieizan, as well as *bessho* associated with Ninnaji and Daigoji. For those *bessho* that were not branches of home temples, management of the institution was often bequeathed from master to disciple.<sup>97</sup>

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96. Okuno, p. 345.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 346-7.

Chōgen built seven *bessho* on separate estates, some of which already had legacies of small temples that served local communities, or functioned as temporary abodes for *hijiri*. Each *bessho* was built around a Pure Land hall (Jōdodō 浄土堂), often accompanied by a bathing facility and refectory. The Pure Land Hall on the Harima estate, now known as Jōdoji 浄土寺, still exists. According to the *Sazenshū* and Chōgen's will, the dimensions of the halls were 3 x 3 bays. Also, the Kayanomoridō built by Chōgen at Daigoji has been excavated, leading to the discovery of a Pure Land Hall with the same dimensions. The space between pillars at Chōgen's halls were larger than many similar structures, with the span of three bays approximately equal to a span of five bays at other temples. This resulted in fewer pillars with wider intervening spaces, enhanced by open ceilings that exposed the roof structure. The spaciousness afforded by the halls allowed many devotees to congregate for Pure Land ceremonies, where they worshiped statues of Amitābha Buddha. Historical documents supply few details of the ritual schedules maintained at these institutions. However, we can also hypothesize that Chōgen employed Pure Land rituals at his *bessho* similar to the ones he witnessed among Pure Land societies in south China during his travels.<sup>98</sup>

Chōgen's *bessho* had no institutional links with Tendai Buddhism, unlike many of the Pure Land halls in China from the time of the Northern Song, which were constructed as part of Tiantai compounds. Pure Land Buddhism in Japan did have strong connections with the early formation of Tendai – for example Ennin practiced the recitation of Amitābha's name at the Kompon Chūdō 根本中堂, the main hall of the East Pagoda (Tōdō 東堂) area; the

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98. Nishita, p. 29.

Enryakuji monk Senkan 千観 (918-984) composed the *Japanese Hymns on the Land of Utmost Bliss of Amitābha* (*Gokurakukoku mida wasan* 極楽国弥陀和讃); and the Tendai patriarch Ryōgen 良源 (912-985) wrote the *Commentary on the Nine Categories of Rebirth in the Pure Land* (*Gokuraku jōdo kuhon ōjōgi* 極楽浄土九品往生義).<sup>99</sup> However, Pure Land thought filtered into many schools of Japanese Buddhism, and by the first half of the 12th century, many schools produced monks who wrote and lectured on the Pure Land. Chinkai 珍海 (1091-1152) was a Tōdaiji Sanron 三論 monk influenced by Genshin and Shandao and wrote *On Sure Rebirths* (*Ketsujō ōjōshu* 決定往生集), and Jippan 実範 (?-1144) recommended *nembutsu* practice in his Esoteric-flavored *Record of Religious Exercises in Sickness* (*Byōchū shūgyōki* 病中修行記). Moreover, several of the Rokushōji temples built by the retired emperors from the late 11th century featured Amitābha halls, incorporating Pure Land worship into what were otherwise primarily Esoteric Buddhist establishments.<sup>100</sup> As will be discussed more in the following chapter, Chōgen approached Pure Land practice at his *bessho* mainly from the synthetic perspective of Shingon, selectively borrowing aspects of Pure Land worship from Yanqingsi, while largely ignoring the Tiantai context there.

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99. Fukuyama, p. 16-29.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 79-86.

### *The Kōyasan shinbessho*

Chōgen first constructed a *bessho* on Kōyasan 高野山 in the late 1170's that came to be known as the "New Bessho" (Shinbessho 新別所).<sup>101</sup> While the Shinbessho was not built as part of Chōgen's activities at Tōdaiji, it served as a model for his later *bessho* both architecturally and functionally. The circumstances of the activities at the Shinbessho are relatively well understood, and help to explain Chōgen's general approach to organized Pure Land rituals.

By the time Chōgen first traveled to Kōyasan in the 1140's, *bessho* had already been established on the mountain for some time. The original monastic center there was founded by Kūkai in 819, but the temple suffered a period of decline following his death, only to be restored by Fujiwara regents and the imperial court in the 11th century. Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1028) visited Kōyasan in 1028, contributing to the institution's prosperity and visibility among aristocratic patrons. Later, Emperor Shirakawa's patronage of temples on the mountain initiated a tradition of imperial support. As part of Shirakawa's sponsorship, *bessho* were constructed in Kōyasan's valleys as residences for *hijiri*. Shirakawa continued his support for these wandering ascetics on Kōyasan over the years: when he visited in 1088 and 1124, he presented the resident *hijiri* with loose-fitting *kosode* 小袖 robes, and praised them as "saints who cut through delusion and practice wholesomeness."<sup>102</sup>

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101. A more recently constructed temple known as Entsūritsuji 円通律寺 now rests on the site of Chōgen's original *Shinbessho*.

102. Gomi, p. 100.

There were several reasons Chōgen chose Kōyasan for the construction of his original *bessho*. First, Chōgen was moved by the memory of his mentor, Minamoto no Moroyuki 源師行, whose family were patrons of the mountain monastery. In the inscription on the bell dated 1176 that mentions Chōgen's travels to China on three occasions,<sup>103</sup> the primary vow to cast the bell is credited to a nun, Daigaku 大覚, as a memorial for four individuals: (1) the monks Shōjō 照静 and (2) Shōkei 聖慶, (3) Minamoto no Tokifusa 源時房, and (4) the nun Myōhō 妙法. Daigaku's identity can be surmised from the individuals commemorated on the bell. Shōkei was the son of Moroyuki and grandson of Tokifusa via the same lineage. The *Biographies of Eminent Monks of This Realm* describes Shōkei as a well-regarded monk at Tōdaiji who died prematurely in 1175 at age twenty-two, just one year before the casting of the bell. Because Shōkei and Tokifusa are both commemorated in the bell's inscription, Daigaku was probably Moroyuki's widow and Shōkei's mother. If this is the case, then the monk Shōjō and the nun Myōhō were also probably Daigaku's children.<sup>104</sup> After the death of her husband and children, Daigaku moved to Amano 天野, a village at the foot of Kōyasan

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103. The bell is now at Senpukuji 泉福寺, about 10 km southwest of Kōyasan. Some documents claim it was originally installed at Niu Shrine 丹生神社 in the village of Hasekebara 長谷毛原村, but in fact it was originally at Enjuin 延寿院, a temple founded by Kakuban's disciple, Yūgen 融願 (Gomi, p. 96).

104. Gomi, p. 98. Because the other children of Moroyuki, Arifusa and Tokimori, are not mentioned on the bell's inscription, they were probably the issue of a different mother.

that had long served as a residence for Buddhist nuns,<sup>105</sup> probably joining a convent there. Based on the bell's inscription, we can hypothesize that Chōgen built the Shinbessho on Kōyasan out of a sense of personal devotion to Moroyuki, his former mentor and sponsor. The Shinbessho honored Moroyuki's family's service to the mountain, and drew attention to the devout faith of his widow, Daigaku, and other nuns in Amano.

Chōgen was also attracted to Kōyasan due to the tradition of Pure Land practice by *hijiri* on the mountain. Several such *hijiri* were particularly well-known. For example, the monk Rentai 蓮待 (1013-1098) moved from Ninnaji to Kōyasan, where he built a small, thatched hut to practice *nembutsu* recitation, earning the title “Ishigura shōnin” 石蔵上人.<sup>106</sup> The *Hosshinshū* 発心集 also tells of a *hijiri* known as Minami tsukushi 南筑紫,<sup>107</sup> who was originally a wealthy landlord of a fifty *chō* estate in Chinzei 鎮西. In a moment of awakening, he gained insight into the concept of non-permanence, committed to the Buddhist path, and took his tonsure on Kōyasan. When his daughter heard that he had taken his

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105. According to the *Hosshinshū* 発心集 collection of *setsuwa* tales from the early Kamakura Period, for example, Saigyō's wife and daughter became nuns in Amano (*Hosshinshū*, p. 160-163). The *Heike monogatari* and *Zōtanshū* 雑談集 also mention Amano in connection with nuns who reside there. In 1183 when the Kōyasan abbot Kaku'a 覚阿 (1143-?) went to make an appeal at the imperial court, he requested approval for the construction of a temple in front of the Amano Shrine (天野社), and separately requested that sixty nuns reside there and engage in day-long *nembutsu* practice (*rokuji nembutsu* 六時念佛) (Gomi, p. 99).

106. “*Ishigura*” refers to a stack of rocks, presumably a reference to his small hut.

107. The name derives from a hut he built on the southern side of the mountain where he resided on Kōyasan.



Buddhist vows, she went to search for him, and eventually became a nun herself, residing in a convent off the mountain where she could look after her father.<sup>108</sup>

Two other Shingon monks who retreated to Kōyasan and apparently influenced Chōgen were Kenkai 兼海 (1107-1155) and Shūken 宗賢. Kenkai, known as the “Little saint” (*shōshō* 小聖), became a disciple of Kakuban 覚鑁 (1095-1144), a Kōyasan master who developed theories underpinning dual Esoteric and Pure Land practice. In 1152, Kenkai built a two-story, octagonal hall on the mountain with a contribution from Emperor Toba 鳥羽天皇 (1103-1156). This particular hall was based a design that suggests continental influence, and may have had a connection with Chōgen’s Kayanomori-dō at Daigoji, which was constructed according to a similar plan. The monk Shūken was originally from Daigoji like Chōgen, and became a temple administrator on Kōyasan. There he built a hall of three

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108. *Hosshinshū*, p. 20-22. Gomi, p. 101-102.

bays known as the “Eastern bessho” (Higashi bessho 東別所).<sup>109</sup> Chōgen followed in the footsteps of these two monks, eventually building his own *bessho* on the mountain.<sup>110</sup>

As with Rentai and Kenkai, who devoted themselves to Pure Land worship, Chōgen also dedicated his Shinbessho to Amitābha. This is evident from an alternative name for his *bessho*, the “Hall for the Expressed Goal of Rebirth” (Senshū ōjōin 専修往生院), in other words, rebirth in Amitābha’s Pure Land. Chōgen’s Shinbessho was also of a simple construction, consisting of one central bay with surrounding halls on four sides (*ichiken yonmen* 一間四面), accompanied by a bath, refectory, and three storied pagoda. The Shinbessho did not have a separate Pure Land Hall like Chōgen’s later *bessho* on the Tōdaiji estates, but it did have a refectory and bath that were incorporated into four of Chōgen’s six later *bessho* according to the *Sazenshū*.<sup>111</sup> The baths were places for Pure Land rituals in which devotees chanted the name of Amitābha while washing their bodies, thus cleansing

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109. According to the the *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku* 高野春秋編年輯録, Shūken installed a gold *jōroku* Buddha and ten *sanshaku* Buddhas there, along with twenty copies of the *Lotus Sutra* and a copy of the *Scripture that Transcends the Principle* (*Rishukyō* 理趣經) (Gomi, p. 101).

110. Chōgen also seems to have been influenced by Saigyō, who built the Rengejō’in 蓮華乗院 on Kōyasan in 1175 slightly before Chōgen constructed his Shinbessho. The sponsors of the hall were the Princess Itsutsuji no sai’in 五辻斎院, the daughter of Emperor Toba, and her mother, Kasuga no Tsubone 春日局. Before taking the tonsure, Saigyō had served as a personal guard (*hokumen no bushi* 北面武士) to Toba, and the Rengejō’in was built to serve the emperor’s vow to attain enlightenment. In 1177, Saigyō’s *bessho* became significant as the site of the summer retreat (*ge’angō*) 夏安居 for the fifty day annual discussions between monks of Kongōbuji 金剛峯寺 and its subtemple, the Daidenbō’in 大伝法院. These discussions were known as the “multi-day continuous seminar” (*chōjitsu fudan* 長日不斷). The Daidenbō’in (aka Negoroji 根来寺) was also the site where Kakuban had advanced his theories of the unity of Mahāvairocana and Amitābha that systemized the basis for Pure Land worship on Kōyasan (Gomi, p. 105).

111. Gomi, p. 103.

themselves both spiritually and physically. Some of the baths were for *hijiri* only, though a bath at the Watanabe *bessho* was assigned for public use, which suggests that each of the *bessho* may have had public bathing facilities.<sup>112</sup> The *Hosshinshū* also notes that one of the chief practices at the Shinbessho was the “unceasing recitation of Amitābha’s name” (*fudan nembutsu* 不断念仏), a ceremony in which practitioners take turns repeating Amitābha’s name, day and night, over the course of several days. Participants in the more rigorous Pure Land rituals were probably the *hijiri* who formed a small society around the institution, as well as warriors who sought retreat from secular society, probably as atonement for their sins. The Shinbessho had a congregation of twenty-four disciples, a number confirmed in the *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku* 高野春秋編年輯録. As with the example of Minami tsukushi, they left their families at the base of the mountain while retreating to the seclusion of the *bessho*. The warriors’ families distributed clothing and food to the society’s members, and should one pass away, the remaining members assembled for the deceased’s burial rites.<sup>113</sup> There were almost certainly public Pure Land rituals performed according to the Buddhist calendar at the Shinbessho, as well. Some of these rituals were likely identical to those discussed in sources related to the Tōdaiji *bessho* below. Others may have been similar to the repentance rituals developed in China by Zunshi that formed an important part of the ritual schedule within the Pure Land society at Yanqingsi.

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112. Goodwin (1994), 94.

113. Nojiri, p. 42. The general practice of conducting rites on behalf of deceased society members was also followed in the Yanqingsi Pure Land society, discussed in Chapter 2.

The Kōyasan shinbessho continued to play an important role in Chōgen's later life. According to the *Hosshinshū*, a few years after the commemoration of the Great Buddha, Chōgen returned to the Shinbessho to reside for a time and practice the continuous recitation of Amitābha's name.<sup>114</sup> According to the *Sazenshū*, of the seven artworks Chōgen brought back from China, four were installed at the Shinbessho, showing its personal significance among the many structures he would build over the course of his later life, including the halls of Tōdaiji.

The Shinbessho also contributed to the growth of Pure Land worship on Kōyasan. In 1181, the former Chūnagon Sukenaga 資長 took the tonsure near Daigoji and visited the mountain, where he authored the *Accounts of Rebirth in the Pure Land on Kōyasan* (*Kōyasan ōjōden* 高野山往生伝), a contribution to the tales of rebirth genre. Sukenaga's work differed from previous literature of this type by focusing on Kōyasan only, chronicling the lives of those who pursued Pure Land rebirth on the mountain in the mold of the Shinbessho society's members.<sup>115</sup>

The society and Pure Land practices Chōgen instituted at the Kōyasan shinbessho would later be duplicated at the Tōdaiji *bessho*, this time in the service of a much larger project that required a network of devotees across the country working on behalf of the Tōdaiji reconstruction.

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114. Gomi, p. 99.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

### *Chōgen's later bessho*

The Shinbessho on Kōyasan was the only *bessho* built by Chōgen that was not constructed on an estate that provided revenues or raw materials for the rebuilding of the Tōdaiji Great Buddha Hall and other Tōdaiji structures. For the Tōdaiji *kanjin* campaign, Chōgen mentions the construction of seven *bessho* in the *Sazenshū*: the Kōyasan shinbessho, the Tōdaiji bessho, the Suō 周防 bessho, the Watanabe 渡辺 bessho (in Settsu 摂津 Province),<sup>116</sup> the Harima 播磨 bessho, the Iga 伊賀 bessho,<sup>117</sup> and the Bichū 備中 bessho. Other documents related to the reconstruction and management of Tōdaiji mention a *bessho* in Bizen 備前 Province and merit-making activities at temples across Yamato 大和 Province including Hokkeji 法華寺 that were also probably related to Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign. Like the Shinbessho, Chōgen's later *bessho* were spaces for Pure Land practice, serving provincial nobles, warriors, and common people who formed demographically heterogeneous Pure Land societies.<sup>118</sup> Several *bessho* are discussed in historical sources, including those at Tōdaiji, Suō, Harima, and Bichū. In addition to operating as the main Pure Land institution on the Tōdaiji grounds, the Tōdaiji bessho was the center of “rites for the repose of dead souls,” ceremonies on behalf of the Taira war dead.

The Suō bessho, now the site of Amidaji 阿弥陀寺, consisted of a Pure Land hall with a *jōroku* statue of Amitābha like the other Tōdaiji *bessho*. Records of the ceremonies at

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116. Estates that belonged to Tōdaiji in Settsu Province are listed in the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 270-272.

117. Estates that belonged to Tōdaiji in Iga Province are listed in the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 273-277.

118. Nojiri, p. 41.

this site mention the performance of a continuous *nembutsu* ritual. For this ritual, twelve practitioners gathered on the eighth day of each month in the Pure Land Hall to take turns chanting Amitābha's name in a loud voice for twelve hours, continuing through the day and night for a period of seven days.<sup>119</sup> The Pure Land Hall at the Harima bessho, also called the "Namu amidabutsuji" 南無阿弥陀仏寺,<sup>120</sup> is one of the few structures built by Chōgen that still exists, and is now known as "Jōdoji." A number of items installed at this *bessho* by Chōgen still remain, including the original *jōroku* Amitābha statue and miniature reliquary towers. The ceremonies recorded at this *bessho* were of two main types: "descent of Amitābha" assemblies (*raigōe* 来迎会) that depicted Amida's manifestation in this world to welcome the faithful to his Pure Land, and group *nembutsu* chanting, which could be accompanied by the purificatory bathing rituals first seen at the Shinbessho. According to the *Sazenshū*, the *raigō* assembly was initially performed at the Watanabe bessho in 1197 by twenty-five disciples costumed as attendant bodhisattvas of Amitābha in a grandiose ceremony attended by the Retired Emperor Go-Toba. At the Harima bessho, *raigō* assemblies began in 1200. For these, the Amitābha statue from the Pure Land Hall was clothed so as to convey the impression of a living Buddha manifest in this world, and then carried across a pond that separated the Pure Land Hall, representing Amitābha's Pure Land,

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119. Yokouchi, p. 570-571.

120. *According to the Chōgen kudashibumi an* 重源下文案. See Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, p. 245, n. 102.

to the Bhaiṣajyaguru Hall (Yakushidō 薬師堂),<sup>121</sup> representing the mundane world.<sup>122</sup> Disciples donned bodhisattva masks and chanted the *nembutsu* during the procession.<sup>123</sup> The Bichū bessho no longer remains, but remnants of Chōgen's activities on the estate can be seen at the nearby Kibitsu Shrine 吉備津宮. The main hall of the shrine is a Muromachi Period (1336-1573) construction, but evinces architectural principles and technologies used by Chōgen in the construction of Tōdaiji and the Harima bessho. Also, a bodhisattva mask owned by the shrine was probably used in one of Chōgen's descent of Amitābha assemblies at the *bessho*.<sup>124</sup>

In 1197, when Chōgen began to worry about his health, he composed a will (*Chōgen yuzurijō* 重源譲状) that named the abbot of the Tōnan'in 東南院, Jōhan, as the beneficiary. Originally the document was intended for the former abbot of Tōnan-in, Shōken, one of Chōgen's closest disciples who had assisted the Tōdaiji reconstruction. However, in 1196 Shōken suddenly passed away, prompting Chōgen to rewrite his will, naming Jōhan the primary beneficiary instead. The will bequeathed the estates of Suō, Harima, Iga, Miyano, Bizen, Naganuma, as well as several *bessho* – Kōyasan, Tōdaiji, Watanabe, and Harima.<sup>125</sup>

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121. The Bhaiṣajyaguru Hall was said to have been built from old materials from an abandoned temple on the estate gathered by Chōgen.

122. Goodwin (1994), p. 94.

123. Nojiri, p. 42.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

125. Ishida, p. 103-104.

Some *bessho* were not specifically mentioned in the will, but were probably implicitly included since they were located on estates that were listed.<sup>126</sup>

Chōgen insisted in his will that the Tōdaiji estates not be divided by his heir:

The above-mentioned temple estates and structures were established and managed by Namu-Amidabutsu (i.e. Chōgen) for the sole purpose of spreading the Buddhist law and benefitting all creatures. Now, however, I am approaching eighty years of age.... I decided to bequeath these holdings to Shōken (later, Jōhan) of Tonan'in so that the Buddhist projects that I initiated will be preserved in the future and managed without neglect... by no means should these properties be divided among other lineages or put under the control of Tōdaiji's abbot or its monks' cabinet, for this would eventually become the cause of decline.<sup>127</sup>

### *Chōgen's Pure Land devotion viewed from his statuary*

Chōgen's devotion to Pure Land Buddhism at his *bessho* and other institutions can be quantified through his production of statues, which overwhelmingly favored Amitābha and other Pure Land varieties. In both the "Tōdaiji" and "miscellaneous" sections of the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen provides a list of the statues he donated to various temples. In the "Tōdaiji" section, Chōgen mentions the items in Table 2:

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126. Goodwin (1994), p. 98.

127. Translation by Goodwin (1994), p. 98-99.



**Table 2.** Distribution of statues dedicated by Chōgen to various temples and shrines, categorized by deity, from “Tōdaiji” section of the *Sazenshū*. Adapted from Oka, p. 9.

Identity of statue	Quantity
Amitābha (Amida 阿弥陀)	9
Avalokiteśvara (Kannon 観音)	6
Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Seishi 勢至)	5
Descent of Amitābha (Amida <i>raigō</i> 阿弥陀来迎)	3
Śākyamuni (釈迦牟尼)	3
Sixteen-foot sculpture ( <i>jōroku</i> 丈六)	25
Heavenly deities ( <i>tenbu</i> 天部)	8
Other	7
Total	66

Of the statues Chōgen donated to Tōdaiji-related institutions, 35% percent (23/66) were of Amitābha (including *raigō* forms) or his two flanking bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The other statues Chōgen donated are also described in more detail in the *Sazenshū*, providing context about their function. One of the statues of Śākyamuni that was installed at the Bichū bessho is described as a “Śākyamuni triptych, one statue each, for the Zennan’indō (welcoming to the Pure Land)” (禪南院堂釋迦三尊像各一軀 (迎淨土)).<sup>128</sup> Due to the interlinear (parenthetical) note<sup>129</sup> that indicate the statue belonged to a “welcoming to the Pure Land” genre, we can surmise it was a Pure Land form of Śākyamuni, also known

128. *Sazenshū*. Kobayashi, p. 484. Also see Oka, p. 8.

129. Written in smaller characters that form two lines for each main line of text and used for parenthetical notes; known as *warichū* 割注 in Japanese.

from elsewhere.<sup>130</sup> Additionally, while the entries for the sixteen-foot statues (*jōroku*)<sup>131</sup> mentioned in the *Sazenshū* do not specify the identity of those deities, of the twenty-five *jōroku* statues dedicated, ten were for the Tōdaiji bessho and nine were for the Kayanomori sanctuary affiliated with Daigoji. Nine of the ten statues dedicated to the Tōdaiji bessho are known to have been unfinished statues of Amitābha dedicated to a temple in Awa Province by Taira no Shigeyoshi 平重能. The tenth statue in this set was an esoteric form of Amitābha.<sup>132</sup> Sets of nine statues of Amitābha were typically created during this period in order to represent the nine levels of rebirth in his Pure Land discussed in the *Contemplation Sutra*,<sup>133</sup> and so the nine statues at the Kayanomori sanctuary were also probably statues of Amitābha.

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130. Śākyamuni preaches the three major Pure Land Sutras and recommends the worship of Amitābha as a means to attain enlightenment. Other examples of the Pure Land forms of Śākyamuni included paintings at the Hōryūji kondō 法隆寺金堂 that depicted the Pure Lands of Śākyamuni, Amitābha, and other Buddhas on four walls, each with separate attendants and retinues. The paintings surrounded a Sumeru altar (*sumi tan* 須彌壇) in the center of the hall. Though the paintings were destroyed in 1949, photographs remain. (See online resource at The University Museum, The University of Tokyo (Tōkyō daigaku sōgō kenkyū hakubutsukan 東京総合研究博物館), 13 May 2016, <[http://www.um.u-tokyo.ac.jp/dm\\_cd/dm\\_cont/horyuji/home.htm](http://www.um.u-tokyo.ac.jp/dm_cd/dm_cont/horyuji/home.htm)>).

131. “Sixteen feet” was one of two standard heights for Buddhist sculptures in the Heian Period. *Jōroku* statues were usually about 280 cm. tall (Morse, p. 98).

132. Taira no Shigeyori was one of the culprits who burned down Tōdaiji. The esoteric statue of Amitābha was added to the set of nine by Chōgen. This was one of the first times ten Amitābha statues were installed in Japan. A precedent for the set of ten Amitābha’s exists in a painting at Chionji 知恩寺 (see *Daikanjin Chōgen*, n. 142), in which one Amitābha makes an Esoteric mudra (the same mudra as Amitābha in the *Womb World Mandala*), while the other nine make mudras resembling those from a transformation painting of the *Sixteen Visualizations* thought to be based on the original Chōgen brought from China (Yokouchi, p. 572).

133. These levels are divided between three grades (high, middle, and low) of three levels each (also high, middle, and low).

Following this reasoning, at least 65% (43/66)<sup>134</sup> of the statues Chōgen dedicated in the “Tōdaiji” section of the *Sazenshū* were related to Pure Land Buddhism. That total might even be higher if the identities of all the other deities listed in this section were known.<sup>135</sup>

The same type of calculation can be performed on the statues Chōgen dedicated in the “miscellaneous” section of the *Sazenshū*, as noted in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Distribution of statues dedicated by Chōgen to various temples and shrines, categorized by deity, from “miscellaneous” section of the *Sazenshū*. Adapted from Oka, p. 9.

Identity of statue	Quantity
Amitābha (Amida 阿弥陀)	3
Avalokiteśvara (Kannon 観音)	0
Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Seishi 勢至)	0
Buddha in closeable cabinet ( <i>zushibutsu</i> 厨子仏)	5
Descent of Amitābha assembly ( <i>mukaekō butsu</i> 迎講仏)	1
Sixteen-foot sculpture ( <i>jōroku</i> 丈六)	5
Śākyamuni (Shakamuni 釈迦牟尼)	2
Other	5
Total	21

Only four of the eighteen (22%) statues in the “miscellaneous” section are clearly labeled as Pure Land statues, either of Amitābha or an Amitābha assembly. However, of the sixteen-foot statues listed here, four were created for Zenkōji and used for the recitation of Amitābha Buddha's name one-million times, also described in this section of the *Sazenshū*. Therefore, those statues almost certainly depicted Amitābha or Pure Land deities, too.

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134. 23 Amitābha or attendants + 1 Pure Land Śākyamuni + 19 *jōroku* statues = 43 statues. The Pure Land Śākyamuni, though described as a triptych, is only counted once here, since the statues are not listed separately in the *Sazenshū*.

135. Oka, p. 8.

The composition of the “Buddhas in closable cabinets,” or *zushibutsu*, also deserves further attention. *Zushi* are miniature shrines, usually constructed of wood, in which Buddhist images, sutras, or relics are installed. On the outside, they have double-hinged doors that allow the object enshrined within to be alternately displayed or concealed. Originally introduced from China, *zushibutsu* were widely used in the Shingon and Tendai esoteric rituals in Japan.<sup>136</sup> In the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen provides more detailed descriptions of the five *zushibutsu*:

(1) “More than ten *cho*<sup>137</sup> northward of eastern Odahara, installed one *zushi* Buddha at the

Kayadō” (東小田原北行十餘町萱堂安置厨子佛一腳).

(2) “Installed a *zushi* of a *raigō* Amitābha triad, one statue each”

(奉安置厨子來迎彌陀三尊立像各一 > ).

(3) “One *zushi* Buddha (Amitābha, three *shaku* [in height]) given to the *ajari* leader”

(厨子佛一腳 (三尺彌陀) 渡帥阿闍梨).

(4) “One *zushi* Buddha, given to Hōbutsubō” (厨子佛一腳渡法佛房).

(5) “One *zushi* (Amitābha triad, one *shaku* and six *sun* [in height], with flanking attendants,

[and on] the door(s), the Great Buddha Hall mandala, Gyōki, Kōbō daishi, Shōtoku

taishi, and the monk Ganjin” (厨子一腳 (阿彌陀三尊一尺六寸脇士扉大佛殿滿茶

羅 行基并 弘法大師 聖德太子 鑒眞和尚)).<sup>138</sup>

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136. “*zushi*.” *JAANUS*.

137. *Cho* was a unit of length, equalling approximately 109 meters.

138. Kobayashi, p. 492-495; Oka, p. 9-10.

The portion of the *Sazenshū* that lists the donation of the *zushibutsu* more generally concerns Chōgen’s close personal relations. In adjacent notes, Chōgen also mentions that he copied the *Lotus Sutra* multiple times for the benefit of his parents and the relatives of friends. He also says that he bestowed Amidabutsu names<sup>139</sup> upon people of all classes in Japan, names he reserved for his inner circle of disciples. For this reason, it is thought that the *zushibutsu* Chōgen records in this portion of the *Sazenshū*, some of which were given to individuals and others to institutions, were also probably items intended for his close associates. The Kayadō mentioned in (1), for example, was a *bessho* used by a *nembutsu* society in the mountains of eastern Odahara founded by the monk Myōhen 明遍 (1142-1224),<sup>140</sup> a Tōdaiji monk who belonged to Chōgen’s inner network of disciples and who adopted the autonym, “Ku-amidabutsu” 空－. Unfortunately, we know little of the two recipients of *zushibutsu* mentioned in either (3) “the *ajari* leader,” or (4) Hōbutsubō, but their names do appear elsewhere in connection with Chōgen’s Watanabe *bessho* Pure Land Hall. The location where the *zushibutsu* in (2) was installed is unclear. However, (2), (3), and (5) all contained Amitābha either as a single divinity or a triptych, and so were almost assuredly used as images for *nembutsu* devotional practice. In sum, all five of the *zushibutsu* Chōgen lists in the *Sazenshū* were intended for Pure Land worship, bringing the total to 62% (13/21) of the statues listed in the “miscellaneous” section.

The most detailed description of any of the *zushibutsu* is (5). This one, in addition to containing an Amitābha triptych, also contained a “Great Buddha Hall mandala” and images

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139. For more on Chōgen’s Amidabutsu names, see Ch. 4.

140. Oka, p. 10.

of four “saints” associated with Tōdaiji: (a) Gyōki, the wandering ascetic who assisted in the building of Tōdaiji; (b) Kōbō daishi, or “Kūkai,” the founder of the Shingon School of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan associated with Tōdaiji;<sup>141</sup> Shōtoku taishi (572-622), the prince legendarily regarded as the founder of Buddhism in Japan during the Asuka Period;<sup>142</sup> and the monk and *vinaya* specialist, Ganjin (C. Jianzhen), who arrived in Japan after repeated unsuccessful sea voyages and presided over Tōdaiji from 754-759, shortly after its construction.<sup>143</sup>

The mandala in *zushi* (5) is only described as the “Great Buddha Mandala,” but it seems likely it was a copy of the Esoteric *Womb World Mandala* or perhaps both *Mandala of the Two Worlds*. Chōgen displayed both mandalas in “halls” (Taizōkaidō 胎藏界堂 and Kongōkaidō 金剛界堂) built upon the Lotus pedestal that supported the Great Buddha according to a diagram of the Great Buddha Hall (*Tōdaiji daibutsuden zu* 東大寺大仏殿図,

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141. Tōdaiji’s curriculum of esoteric doctrine owed to Kūkai. The inclusion of Kūkai in this list of four saints was thus probably indicative of Chōgen’s training within the Shingon school at Daigoji and Kōyasan. The *Sazenshū* notes that “the above [*zushi*] was passed down to me from An-Amidabutsu [Kaikai]” (右自安阿彌陀佛手傳得之奉隨身). However, Chōgen probably specified the design of the *zushi*, which was then executed by Kaikai, his chief sculptor.

142. In this case, Shōtoku taishi may actually refer to Emperor Shōmu, who founded Tōdaiji, since Shōmu and later emperors sometimes regarded themselves as incarnations of Shōtoku taishi due to their own extensive patronage of Buddhism. Both the *Eiga Monogatari* 栄花物語 and *Ōkagami* 大鏡, for example, describe Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966-1028) as an incarnation of Shōtoku taishi, noting that Shōtoku claimed anyone who preaches Buddhism in the future must be his reincarnation. Emperor Shōmu’s self-portrayal was probably related to these earlier precedents (see Lee, p. 65-66, footnote 59).

143. The idea of “four saints of Tōdaiji” is also mentioned in Shōken’s *Hishō*, though only one of the saints mentioned here, Gyōki, corresponds to the four saints mentioned in that work (or possibly two if we consider Shōtoku taishi as a reference to Shōmu). See Chapter 4, p. 233 for more on Shōken’s list of four saints.

1284).<sup>144</sup> This is not the only possible conclusion,<sup>145</sup> but no other mandalas are known to have been exhibited in the Great Buddha Hall during his period, and other examples of the *Mandala of the Two Worlds* used in *zushi* do exist from the fourteenth century.<sup>146</sup> If the “Great Buddha Mandala” refers to the *Mandala of the Two Worlds*, it would also help explain the decision to include Kūkai within the lineage of four saints of Tōdaiji in the *zushi*, since Kūkai originally brought these mandalas from China and presented them as mainstays of Shingon ritual practice. Additionally, including the *Mandala of the Two Worlds* along with the Amitābha triptych would correspond to Chōgen’s overarching ideological persuasion that identified Amitābha and Mahāvairocana, an argument explored further in Chapter 4.

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144. See Hisano and Yokouchi, p. 528.

145. Chōgen uses the term “Mandala of the Great Buddha” (Daibutsu *mandara* 大仏曼荼羅) in another line of the *Sazenshū*, but there merely notes that he presented seven copies of a painting of that mandala (see Kobayashi, p. 494). This is of no help in interpreting the mandala’s design. Oka, p. 11-12, suggests two more possibilities for the identity of the mandala in *zushi* (5). First, he hypothesizes that it may have been a Pure Land mandala that was hung as a prototype within the Great Buddha Hall. As discussed before, Chōgen did bring a painting of the Sixteen Contemplations of the Pure Land (*jūroku sōkan* 十六想観) from China and deposited it at Tōdaiji before it was eventually transferred to the Tōdaiji sub-temple and former *bessho*, Amidaji 阿弥陀寺. This painting was not a *mandala*, per say, but by the late Heian Period the extension of the Japanese word “*mandara*” 曼荼羅 included this type of artwork. However, there is no evidence this particular painting was ever displayed in the Great Buddha Hall. Oka also suggests that the mandala in *zushi* (5) may have been a replica of an Abhidharma (*kusha* 俱舍) mandala believed to date from the late Heian or early Kamakura, also in Tōdaiji’s possession. That particular mandala shows the ten patriarchs of the Abhidharma “school,” which was really a discipline of monastic scholarship in China and Japan, surrounding the Śākyamuni triptych in the center. While Oka’s hypothesis is possible, there is little evidence that Chōgen ever studied Abhidharma scholarship to the extent he studied Esoteric Buddhism (the subject of the *Mandala of the Two Worlds*), nor that he was interested in the Abhidharma lineage.

146. See Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. (2001), n. 87 and 88.

Examining the statuary Chōgen dedicated in the “Tōdaiji” and “miscellaneous” sections of the *Sazenshū*, it becomes clear that the greatest proportion of these statues were related to Pure Land worship, representing either Amitābha, an Amitābha triptych, a Pure Land form of Śākyamuni, Amitābha’s *raigō* descent to welcome believers to the Pure Land, or Amitābha concealed in a *zushi*. Many of these statues were installed in the Pure Land halls on the various Tōdaiji *bessho*, or in any case were donated to institutions with congregations of *nembutsu* practitioners. By this reckoning, Pure Land worship was central to the ideology and practice of Chōgen and his devotees.

### **Chōgen’s bessho and saving the enemies of Buddhism**

Chōgen’s Pure Land vision for his *bessho* also extended to the salvation of the enemies of Buddhism – in particular, the members of the Taira clan who set fire to Tōdaiji and Nara. Those crimes resulted in the execution of many of the culprits, some by the hands of Tōdaiji monks personally. The desire to save the Taira from past sins was not just a selfless act of compassion. Rather, the religious and political actors that sponsored Chōgen’s activities hoped to reconcile the opposing factions of the civil war, whose mutual antipathy continued even after the end of active hostilities. The authorities also sought to ensure that the ghosts of the deceased would not return to wreak vengeance upon the living responsible for their deaths.<sup>147</sup>

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147. The *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 echoes these anxieties by repeating an urban legend that Kiyomori returned from the grave in the form of a dragon and caused an earthquake that struck Kyoto in 1185. See Aoki, p. 182-183; *Heike monogatari*, Ch. 12, “The Great Earthquake.”



Pure Land Buddhism had long been understood as a path of salvation for anyone who appealed to Amitābha's grace, even those who had committed the most heinous crimes, or *pārājika* offenses (*harai* 波羅夷).<sup>148</sup> For this reason, Pure Land Buddhism was a natural doctrinal fit for Chōgen and the Japanese authorities who sought redemption for the Taira. The *Contemplation Sutra* (*Kan muryōjukyō* 觀無量壽經), one of the three major Pure Land texts, is the original locus of the idea that even the worst sins can be redeemed:

The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī, “Those who attain birth on the lowest level of the lowest grade<sup>149</sup> are the sentient beings who commit such evils as the five grave offenses, the ten evil acts, and all kinds of immorality. Owing to such evil karma, a fool like this will fall into evil realms and suffer endless agony for many kalpas. When he is about to die, he may meet a good teacher, who consoles him in various ways, teaching him the wonderful Dharma and urging him to be mindful of the Buddha; but he is too tormented by pain to do so. The good teacher then advises him, ‘If you cannot concentrate on the Buddha then you should say instead, “Homage to Amitāyus Buddha.”’ In this way, he sincerely and continuously says, ‘Homage to Amitāyus Buddha’ ten times. Because he calls the Buddha’s Name, with each repetition the evil karma that would bind him to birth and death for eighty *koṭis* of kalpas is extinguished.”<sup>150</sup>

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148. “These are: (1) engaging in immoral sexual behavior or bestiality (*S. abrahmacarya*, *C. yin*, *J. in* 淫); (2) stealing (*S. adattādāna*, *C. dao*, *J. tō* 盜); (3) killing a human being (*S. vadhahiṃṣa*, *C. sha*, *J. satsu* 殺), and (4) lying about one's spiritual attainments (*uttaramanuṣyadharma-prālapa*, *C. wang*, *J. mō* 妄)” (DDB).

149. There are nine levels of rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land according to the sutra, divided between three grades and three levels. The lowest level of the lowest grade (*C. xiapin xiasheng*, *J. gebon geshō* 下品下生) is designated for those who committed the worst offenses during their lifetimes.

150. Inagaki, p. 85. Translation by Inagaki. This passage appears in the context of the sixteenth and final visualization of the Pure Land recommended by the Buddha to Queen Vaidehī.

The authoritative commentaries on the *Contemplation Sutra*, including one by Shandao 善導 (613-681) that became standard in Japan, interpret the passage more or less at face value: even those who have committed the five *pārājika* offenses during their lifetimes can be reborn in the Pure Land provided they repeat the name of Amitābha (Amitāyus) ten times with sincerity. This interpretation helped to popularize Pure Land practices in medieval Japan, and made Pure Land Buddhism particularly effectual in the eyes of those who sought the salvation of war criminals executed following the Gempei War. Chōgen was positioned at the center of these efforts, which were also orchestrated by the descendants of the Taira war dead, the retired emperor, the Kujō and other Fujiwara clans,<sup>151</sup> and the Minamoto-led shogunate.

The Taira war dead were directed toward Amitābha's Pure Land and eventual salvation using several methods. First, their names were included on lists inserted into Amitābha statues.<sup>152</sup> One such list dates to *ca.* 1194 at Kengōin, a temple sponsored by relatives of Kanezane, and contains many names from the Taira clan who perished in the war or were executed shortly after: Kiyomori 清盛, Tadanori 忠度, Arimori 有盛, Yukimori 行盛, Motomori 基盛, Tsunemasa 経正, Michimori 通盛, Koremori 惟盛, Sukemori 資盛, Kiyotsune 清経, Norimori 教盛, Munemori 宗盛, Shigemori 重盛, Shigehira 重衡, Tomomori 知盛, Tokimori 時盛, Tokitada 時忠, and Tokuko 徳子. In comparison, the list

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151. The Fujiwara clan temple, Kōfukuji 興福寺, was burned by Shigehira along with Tōdaiji and the rest of Nara, earning the Fujiwara's malice.

152. This practice, known as *kechien kōmyō* 結縁交名, is covered more extensively in Chapter 4.

only names a few members of the Minamoto clan: Yukiie 行家, Yoshinaka 義仲, Yoshitsune 義経, and Yorimasa 頼政.

A second way to direct the Taira war dead to the Pure Land was to emphasize their past Pure Land devotion. This was the case at the Tōdaiji bessho:

This temple's Pure Land Hall was originally constructed in Awa Province 阿波国. The original vow [to build the hall was taken by] a resident of that province, [Taira no] Shigeyoshi 重能, who was the Awa High Steward of Popular Affairs (*Awa minbu dayū* 阿波民部大夫). However, the merit [created by sponsoring] these statues was not completed. [Before they could be finished,] Shigeyoshi entered service as a vassal of [Taira no] Kiyomori and [eventually] became [one of] the officers who burned down [Tōdaiji] temple. Because of the protracted chaos caused by this rebellion, [Shigeyoshi] was put to death. In order to liberate [him] from these sins, this [Pure Land] Hall was built on the bell tower hill, where [these] nine *jōroku* [Amitābha statues] were installed and *nembutsu* performed by ten thousand people.<sup>153</sup>

A third method of establishing a connection between the Taira and the Pure Land was to use their property for religious purposes. In 1190 when the ridgepole of Tōdaiji was raised,<sup>154</sup> an Iga 伊賀 estate was taken from Taira officers and commended to Chōgen's Chinese technician and manager, Chen Heqing. The estate's revenues were designated for the construction of the Tōdaiji bessho's Pure Land Hall. Thus, this estate, confiscated from the Taira, was in effect used to finance the commemorative rites that would save the Taira

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153. *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki*. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 571. Chōgen is said to have died at the Tōdaiji bessho while lying in front of these nine statues of Amitābha (Rosenfield, p. 43; Kobayashi, p. 32-35).

154. *Gyokuyō*, p. 630.

war dead from their sins. The Tōdaiji bessho Pure Land Hall became a prominent symbol of the salvation of the enemies of Buddhism.<sup>155</sup>

The Pure Land Buddhist methods designed to redeem the Taira could also be combined together with relic worship in “rites for the repose of dead souls” (*chinkon* 鎮魂). These rites were based on the exemplary conduct of the Indian Buddhist monarch, Aśoka, who legendarily fashioned 84,000 miniature reliquary towers to distribute across his kingdom following a series of bloody wars that annexed neighboring territories on the Indian subcontinent.

One of the earliest mentions of these rites during the Gempei War followed the death of Taira no Kiyomori in 1181. At that time, his heir, Taira no Munemori 平宗盛 (1147-1185), took command of his father’s army and wrote to Go-Shirakawa,<sup>156</sup> saying:

In world affairs at this moment, militancies cannot be ended, and yet we must return to some plan for governance. What about [holding] a ceremony at Ise Shrine without delay? Also, what about fulfilling the example of King Aśoka and constructing 84,000 small [reliquary] towers (*kitō* 基塔)?<sup>157</sup>

Go-Shirakawa was charged with the organization of the rites suggested by Munemori. Go-Shirakawa wrote to Kanezane for assistance with the performance of an 84,000 tower commemorative rite (*kuyō*) using miniature pagodas measuring about five *sun* 寸 and containing the Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī (寶篋印陀羅尼 *hōkyōin darani*). Soon after, he also sent a letter to Kanezane’s elder sister requesting the manufacture of five-hundred such

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155. Yokouchi, p. 571-572.

156. Go-Shirakawa would not declare his alliance with the Minamoto until 1183.

157. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 529. Also see Yokouchi, p. 565.

pagodas, which was probably closer to the actual number used in the ceremony. Several commemorative services involving the pagodas were performed, with compulsory “invitations” for assistance sent to many nobles.<sup>158</sup>

Efforts to conduct rituals for the repose of dead souls were not only performed at the state level, but also by individual aristocratic families. For example, Kanezane conducted a *kanjin* campaign among family members in order to finance the production of a statue of Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara (*Jūichimen kannon* 十一面觀音) for the war dead. This statue, still extant, contains a *kechien* list<sup>159</sup> with the names of donors. The *kechien* list accentuates that the creation of the statue was not the idle dream of some monk (或僧の夢想), but work taken seriously by noble families under the imperial court (院中以下、家毎にこの営みあり). Likewise, Yoritomo organized a *kanjin* campaign among family members to raise money for an 84,000 Aśoka commemorative ritual on their behalf. As justification for that endeavor, Yoritomo wrote:

Following the chaos of the Hōgen 保元 [Rebellion in 1156], [members of] the Minamoto and Taira clans rebelled, and imperial rule was unsettled. Taira no Kiyomori upset [the] imperial rule and destroyed the Buddhist law. Following this, he incinerated the [Great Buddha statue of] Vairocana (at Tōdaiji) and imprisoned the Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa. I rectified this, but as punishments were meted, those who lost their lives numbered in the tens of millions. Because of this, are not grudges inherited across the divides between lifetimes, and does not bitterness grow among the travelers of hell? By all means, as victory is met with a mixture of contempt and satisfaction (by those defeated and victorious), [we] must impartially distribute [acts of] salvation (to both sides). We have heard it said that if enmity is repaid by enmity, then [such] hostility will continue from life to life. If enmity is repaid with virtue,

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158. Yokouchi, p. 565-566.

159. A list that established a connection between the donors of the merit-making activity and the Buddhist deity invoked by the statue. For more on *kechien* activities, see Ch. 4, p. 257.

then it will be transformed into affection. From here, following in the footsteps of Aśoka, we have constructed these 84,000 jeweled towers. So that their merits will be ample, Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī have been respectfully copied. Thus, in all provinces of this miraculous land, a performance of this commemorative rite will be deferentially completed. Based on the examples of [Emperor] Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-626) and [Emperor] Taizong 太宗 (r. 626-649) of the Tang 唐, who invited the [spirits of] dead soldiers to the Hall of Purification, [as well as] Jōgū taishi 上宮太子 (aka Shōtoku taishi, 572-622) and Emperor Suzaku (朱雀天皇, 923-952), who saved [Mononobe no] Moriya 守屋 (?-587) and [Taira no] Masakado 將門 (?-940), we respectfully ask that these *gorintō* [reliquary towers] and Treasure Chest [Seal] Dhāraṇī save those executed and guide all beings from this dharma realm.”<sup>160</sup>

The practice of performing the 84,000 reliquary pagoda Aśoka ritual and other ceremonies on behalf of the war dead continued through the end of the war. In 1182 at Hosshōji 法勝寺, the Tendai monks Kenshin 顕真 (1131-1192), Tankyō 湛教, and Chikai 智海 performed repentance rituals designed to negate the pernicious effects of ghosts. Later, in 1185, after Taira no Shigehira 平重衡 (1158-1185) publicly displayed the decapitated heads of enemy soldiers as a warning to Kyoto, the retired emperor sent a messenger to Kanezane to discuss the performance of an Aśoka pagoda ritual. A couple of weeks later, following the drowning of Emperor Antoku, the juvenile emperor backed by the Taira, Kanezane sent Go-Shirakawa a request to bestow a posthumous name upon Antoku, construct a Buddhist Hall on the Dan no ura 壇ノ浦 memorial ground,<sup>161</sup> and hold a commemorative ceremony (*kuyō*) for Antoku and those who died under his (nominal) command. During the next month, Kanezane sponsored a *kuyō* at the Shōkōmyōin 勝光明院 treasure house of Emperor Toba 鳥

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160. *Kamakura ibun*, no. 937, 建久八年十月源親長啓白文. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 566.

161. Dan no ura was a major naval engagement in which the Taira-appointed Emperor Antoku was killed.

羽天皇 (1103-1156), and provided gilded bronze containers, scrolls, and a *ganmon* for use in a ceremonial copying of the *Lotus Sutra*. In addition, Kanezane sent two copies of the *Lotus Sutra* to Tōdaiji, one for a *kuyō* honoring his deceased wife, and the other to redeem the war dead.<sup>162</sup>

Chōgen served a central role in ceremonies performed on behalf of the war dead at Tōdaiji. While recasting the Great Buddha, Chōgen added some of the gilt bronze effects of Taira no Shigehira, responsible for setting fire to Tōdaiji, to the molten bronze alloy that would be cast into the statue. His notion was that Shigehira's sins would be cleansed by the connection formed between his effects and the new statues. According to the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*:

[Shigehira's] wife was ordered to provide items he had personally carried fashioned from gilt bronze. Chōgen showed his compassion by wishing to use these silver and bronze items to cast the great statue. The furnace instantly destroyed [Shigehira's effects], but since they were made of gilt bronze, their essence was not altered. All [the molten material] streamed forth, as [Shigehira's] deep sins were permeated with the Tathāgata's mercy.<sup>163</sup>

Chōgen also secreted more than eighty Buddhist relics in the Daibutsu, two of which were provided by Go-Shirakawa and three by Kanezane, along with copies of the *Treasure Chest Seal Dhāraṇī Sutra* and *Lotus Sutra* donated for this purpose by aristocrats and priests at the behest of the retired emperor. One of the purposes of installing these artifacts was the transformation of the Great Buddha from an inert statue into a living Buddha, capable of

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162. Yokouchi, p. 565-568.

163. *Tōdaiji yōroku*. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 568-569.

bestowing his compassion upon sentient beings, in particular those who died on battlefields or were executed during the civil war.

Chōgen also organized rituals for the war dead on Kōyasan, which by the end of the 12th century, had become an asylum for defeated warriors and nobles who wished to withdraw from the world, weary of the violence that consumed their homeland. Prayers and rituals were conducted on the mountain dedicated to the casualties of the battle of Dan no ura. The Kengōin list that contains many members of the Taira war dead also includes several monks who administered rites on Kōyasan, including Chōgen, Eisai, Ban-Amidabutsu, Myōhen, and Shōken. These activities date to at least 1183, when Ban-Amidabutsu requested imperial permission to hold a memorial service for the war dead. To this end, he organized a ritual that included the invocation of Acala (不動明王 Fudō myōō), one of the Five Wisdom Kings of the Womb World, using a Takaō mandara 高尾曼荼羅<sup>164</sup> installed in the *konpon daitō* 根本大塔 on Kōyasan. In 1184, Prince Shukaku 守覚法親王 (1150-1202), who had taken vows to become a Buddhist monk, asked that the remains of Taira no Tsunemasa be interred on the mountain. Allegedly, Chōgen buried Shigehira's remains in the Kōyasan Oku no in 奥院. In 1185, another series of rites were ordered by imperial decree. Over time, Kōyasan earned a reputation as the last resting place for those who suffered untimely deaths, partially through Chōgen activities on the mountain dedicated to the war dead.<sup>165</sup>

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164. An esoteric mandala for the deity Acala used in Japan since the ninth century. An early example is found at Jingoji 神護寺 in Kyōto.

165. Aoki (1999), p. 186-187.



### Chōgen's engineering: good works associated with the bessho

Beyond the rituals organized at the Tōdaiji *bessho* to benefit the living and dead, Chōgen also completed land development and public works projects that provided worldly, tangible benefits to the ordinary people who resided on or near his estates. Some of these projects benefited Tōdaiji, as well, such as a route Chōgen developed in Suō to transport raw materials to Nara. However, many of these good works lacked any concrete connection to Tōdaiji apart from their proximity to Tōdaiji estates. These good works can be seen as one aspect of Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign, since they enhanced his reputation as a *hijiri*, or “saint,” and earned goodwill that he could leverage to complete the Tōdaiji reconstruction.

As should be apparent by now, Chōgen was not just a religious specialist, but studied a variety of fields, including art, architecture, and construction. Chōgen's knowledge was exemplary at the time partially because he had traveled to China, where he learned about contemporary continental developments in these fields. However, he was not alone in studying subjects apart from Buddhism. From ancient times through the medieval period in Japan, monks were more than religious practitioners. They were also eclectic scholars of the Five Sciences (*S. pañca-vidyāgomei*, *J. gomyō* 五明), fields of learning in ancient India that also guided the education of Buddhist monks in East Asia. These fields included: (1) grammar and composition (*S. śabda-vidyā*, *J. shōmyō* 聲明); (2) arts and mathematics (*S. śilpakarma-sthāna-vidyā*, *J. kukōmyō* 工巧明); (3) medicine (*S. cikitsā-vidyā*, *J. ihō myō* 醫方明); (4) logic and epistemology (*S. hetu-vidyā*, *J. inmyō* 因明); and (5) Buddhist philosophy (*S. adhyātma-vidyā*, *J. naimyō* 內明).<sup>166</sup> Prior to and during the Heian period, monks such as

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166. “五明.” *DDB*.

Dōji 道慈 (?-744), Gyōki 行基 (668-749), and Kūkai were particularly renowned for their expertise in construction techniques. Gyōki not only put his knowledge of mechanics and engineering to work by building temples, but allegedly accomplished various irrigation works and bridge building projects, as well. Chōgen was greatly influenced by Gyōki, and also demonstrated a penchant for engineering and construction. Eisai 栄西 (1141-1215), who inherited Chōgen's position as the Tōdaiji *kanjin hijiri*, was likewise erudite in these fields. Not coincidentally, Dōji, Kūkai, Chōgen, and Eisai all traveled to China and returned with knowledge not only of Buddhist doctrine, but also of contemporary technologies that outpaced those employed in Japan during each of their respective periods. In the interim between the last official voyage to China and Chōgen's travels, the Chinese had made many advancements in the fields of commerce, agriculture, and engineering that had yet to be absorbed in Japan. Chōgen made a point of learning about these advancements, while forming personal relationships with technicians such as Chen Heqing.<sup>167</sup>

Chōgen recorded many of his construction and engineering accomplishments in his *Sazenshū*. There, Chōgen mentions: (1) the construction of the Watanabe 渡辺 and Nagara 長柄 bridges in Settsu Province; (2) the repair of Uozumi 魚住 harbor, also in Settsu; (3) the repair of Sayama 狭山 reservoir in Kawachi Province 河内, (4) the repair of the Kiyomizudera 清水寺 and Seta 瀬田 bridges in Yamashiro 山城 Province, (5) the maintenance of the Funasaka mountain pass 船坂峠 in Bizen Province, and (6) the maintenance of roads in Iga Province. Many of these good works projects were associated with regions where Chōgen had constructed *bessho*, or at least managed estates for Tōdaiji.

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167. Iwato, p. 45.

In particular, (1) Watanabe bridge is thought to have been located near the Watanabe bessho, (2) Uozumi harbor was adjacent to the Harima bessho, (5) Bizen was named as a province for material supplies for Tōdaiji in 1193, and (6) Iga was the site of the Iga bessho. Except for the Sayama reservoir, each of the entries in the *Sazenshū* are notably connected in some way with transportation infrastructure between Suō and Bizen, whose estates both provided raw materials to Tōdaiji, via Watanabe.<sup>168</sup> Through documentation and archaeological remains, we know something about the Uozumi harbor and Sayama reservoir repairs, as well as some details of Chōgen's transportation infrastructure improvements in Suō.

Uozumi harbor 魚住泊<sup>169</sup> was located in Harima Province, the site of the Ōbe Estate. Uozumi, along with Ōwada harbor 大和田泊, was two of five harbors said to have been originally constructed by Gyōki in the Nara Period that remained in use through Chōgen's time and required repeated maintenance. Chōgen's Harima bessho and the Ōbe estate were approximately twenty km. north of the harbor. From this location, Uozumi was strategically placed as a major port on the Seto Inland Sea (*Seto naikai* 瀬戸内海) waterway. After the establishment of the Ōbe estate, Uozumi became an important port for Chōgen to ship materials destined for Tōdaiji. A large kettle for boiling bath water at Chōgen's bessho was also cast here, and in nearby Kande Village 神出村, shingles were produced for roofing.<sup>170</sup>

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168. Iwato, p. 46.

169. The harbor still exists, and is now known as Eigashima Harbor 江井ヶ島港 in present-day Akashi City 明石市.

170. Iwato, p. 46.

According to the *Sazenshū*, in the centuries since Gyōki constructed the Uozumi harbor, it fell into disrepair. Boats had difficulty entering and exiting the harbor, causing many lives to be lost. Chōgen expressed the desire to repair the harbor, and in 1196 permission was granted by the Department of State (Daishōkan 太政官) to begin renovations. The local populace also appealed for repairs to the Ōwada harbor and another port nearby, and the original plan seems to have been to renovate all three. However, evidence of repairs to Ōwada has yet to be discovered, and the *Sazenshū* does not mention them. Paraphrasing the grant of permission, it says:

(A) Uozumi harbor: The Uozumi harbor was constructed by Gyōki in the Tempyō era (729-749) and was damaged long ago. In 833, the Minister of the Right Kiyohara 清原 was ordered to conduct repairs, however he was unsuccessful. In 867, the Tōdaiji monk Kenwa 賢和 also started the project but was unable to finish. He left it abandoned and it entered decay. Because of this, many boats in the three circuits of Sanyō 山陽, Nankai 南海, and Saikai 西海 have sunk, and people have lost their lives. Many in the surrounding areas have expressed alarm. So we call on Chōgen to carry out the wishes of the people and repair the harbor.

(B) Ōwada harbor: For the last 20 years, logs and debris have damaged the harbor, causing rough wind and waves, and boats to be easily lost.

(C) Kawajiri 川尻 has flooded and there is no coastline to dock boats for many miles. The wide lagoon receives winds from four sides, so ships are unable to enter Kawajiri or they sink.<sup>171</sup>

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171. Reprinted in Yokouchi, p. 549.

The renovations to Uozumi harbor (and possibly the others) involved replacing breakwaters (*ishigura* 石棕) that had broken or become dislodged. The breakwaters were necessary to protect ships because the harbor was not located on a river inlet, and strong waves crashed directly onto shore. In the present-day harbor, stone piles known as the “saint’s breakwater” still remain. In 1979, several large pine trunks and rocks piles were discovered to the west of the mouth of the Akane River 赤根川 that are thought to have served in Chōgen’s harbor renovations, too.<sup>172</sup> While the Uozumi port was significant for goods shipped from Suō and Bizen, Chōgen’s ultimate decision to effect repairs to the harbor was apparently a response to local residents and monks who implored Chōgen for assistance. Because Chōgen was busy with other projects related to the Tōdaiji reconstruction, he declined their requests three times before finally agreeing.<sup>173</sup>

A similar public works project undertaken by Chōgen was the renovation of the Sayama reservoir, finished in 1202. Sayama was an irrigation pool that dated to the end of the 6th or beginning of the 7th century, though the *Chronological Record of Gyōki* (*Gyōki nempu* 行基年譜) credits the pond’s constructed to Gyōki in 741. A stele dated to 1202 was discovered at the reservoir in 1993 which described Chōgen’s repairs in some detail:

Many years ago, the bodhisattva Gyōki visited this pond when he was sixty-four years old. In the third year of the Tempyō Era (731), he started building the embankment and laying the drainage [for the reservoir]. However, during [the intervening] years, [the pond] gradually filled up [with debris] and was damaged. Therefore more than fifty villagers were recruited from the three provinces of Settsu 摂津, Kawachi 河内, and Izumi 和泉. The Japanese monk Namu-Amidabutsu (i.e. Chōgen) arrived when he was eighty-two years

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172. Iwato, p. 46-47.

173. Yokouchi, p. 550.

old in the spring of the second year of the Kennin Era (1202) to repair [the reservoir]. On the seventh day of the second month, he began dredging the mud, and on the eighth day of the fourth month he laid stone drainage pipes. On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the work was finished. Among [those who participated] were clerics, laymen, men, women, novice monks, children, beggars and outcasts, who hauled stone with their own hands. [Though] this did not bring fame or fortune, it provided a rewarding service (*nyōyaku* 饒益).<sup>174</sup>

The Sayama repairs seem to have had few direct benefits for Tōdaiji.<sup>175</sup> Rather, Chōgen undertook the repairs late in his life when he could adjourn his work on the temple. As with the Uozumi harbor renovations, his work at Sayama was a response to entreaties from the local populace. At the time, many provinces depended on Sayama reservoir for water, including Settsu, Kawachi, and Izumi, as well as about fifty villages downstream. The project benefited these communities, and most of the labor appears to have been contributed by their members.<sup>176</sup>

Chōgen also developed the transportation infrastructure in Suō Province, partially out of the necessity to ship raw materials from the region to Nara. Shortly after Suō Province was designated to provide timber for the Tōdaiji reconstruction in 1186, Chōgen and his temple carpenters visited the province and selected trees that could serve as pillars for the Great Buddha Hall.<sup>177</sup> According to the *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡, the timbers were 156

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174. Text reprinted from stele in Harada, p. 206. *Nyōyaku* is the second of the ten practices 十行 stages of the bodhisattva (*DDB*).

175. Kobayashi, p. 126-131. The general region also included estates owned by Kōfukuji, which helped to sponsor the Tōdaiji reconstruction, as well as the homes of bronze casters in Kawachi. However, these connections appear to have been tangential.

176. Iwato, p. 48.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

centimeters in diameter and twenty meters long.<sup>178</sup> In order to ship such large logs, Chōgen constructed a road of approximately thirty km. from the estate to the Saba River 佐波川, on which the timbers were floated downstream to the Seto Inland Sea. He was able to maintain the orientation of the timbers on the river by erecting one hundred eighty checking stations along the riverbank manned by attendants who could adjust the timbers' orientation as needed. In areas where the stream's water flow was insufficient, Chōgen piled rocks to create artificial dams, and laid stone pavements at the water's edge to direct the current.<sup>179</sup> While this route was constructed for shipping the logs, it may have also been used by others in the region to ship goods to the Kinai capital region, as well.

While some of Chōgen's public works were driven by the need to ship raw materials to Tōdaiji, Chōgen's projects also benefited local communities by improving public roads and bridges, enhancing safety for fisherman and sailors, and securing water resources for agriculture. These good works enhanced Chōgen's reputation as a monk of the people and enabled his *kanjin* campaign as he earned the people's trust, particularly in areas where he controlled estates.

### **Legitimizing the *kanjin* campaign with help from the gods**

Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign was further legitimated by attempts to compare his role as *kanjin hijiri* to that of Gyōki, the 8th century monk who allegedly served as the original *kanjin hijiri* for the construction of Tōdaiji under the direction of Emperor Shōmu. As with

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178. *Azuma kagami*, reprinted in Kobayashi, p. 153.

179. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3 p. 417-422. Iwato, p. 47.

Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign, the construction expenses for the temple in the 8th century were partially funded by public donations, though Shōmu specifically requested that they be voluntary. In his 743 edict for the project, Shōmu declared, "If there are those whose hearts are moved to donate even a twig, a blade of grass or a clump of earth to help in the construction of this statue, these offerings should all be accepted. The provincial and district officials must not intrude on the people for the sake of this project, and forcibly exact donations from them."<sup>180</sup> A few days after the edict was published, Gyōki and his attendants are said to have embarked on their *kanjin* campaign, for which Gyōki was bestowed the rank of Director of Monks (Daisōjō 大僧正) in 764.<sup>181</sup>

Gyōki initially earned a reputation as a popular itinerant preacher early in life. However, his evangelism was condemned by the government, perhaps at the behest of religious authorities that felt endangered by their inability to control the spread of Buddhism on their own terms. According to the received historical narrative, the government finally determined that Gyōki's popularity and experience traveling the countryside as a wandering *hijiri* should benefit the country, and so they decided to employ him as *kanjin hijiri*. Shōmu believed he could preempt objections to his temple's considerable expense by enlisting a monk widely adored among the people.<sup>182</sup>

Chōgen and his advocates used the Gyōki narrative to their advantage when orchestrating the *kanjin* campaign to rebuild Tōdaiji centuries later. In his *kanjin* appeal,

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180. Goodwin (1990), p. 221. Translation by Goodwin.

181. Yoneyama, p. 183.

182. Piggott, p. 5; Goodwin (1990), p. 222.



Chōgen mentions that Gyōki promoted Buddhism among the populace when Tōdaiji was founded, thereby justifying his campaign based on historical precedent. These attempts to draw parallels between Chōgen and Gyōki are also found in the *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*.<sup>183</sup> According to an account there, when Chōgen first approached the official in charge of the Tōdaiji reconstruction, Fujiwara no Yūkitaka 藤原行隆 (1130-1187), in order to volunteer his services, Yūkitaka mentioned that Gyōki was first ordered by Emperor Shōmu to coordinate a *kanjin* campaign, and that campaign should serve as the model for financing the reconstruction.<sup>184</sup>

However, scholars have pointed out that Gyōki's role as *kanjin hijiri* for Tōdaiji only became part of the Gyōki legend after Chōgen's own campaign. Heian period sources such as *Hokke genki* 法華驗記 and *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 describe Gyōki as a miracle-worker and popular Buddhist preacher who assisted with good works projects such as the building of roads, bridges, and hospitals, but do not mention his role as solicitor of donations.<sup>185</sup> Gyōki also appears in the original Tōdaiji dedication, but not as the *kanjin hijiri*. Nevertheless, by the 14th century, the *Shasekishū* 砂石集 unequivocally ascribes this role to Gyōki.<sup>186</sup>

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183. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 73.

184. *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 11. Goodwin (1990), p. 232.

185. Goodwin (1990), p. 233. Also see Dykstra, p. 27-29; Nagazumi and Ikegami, vol. 1, p. 13-17, p. 27-29; and *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 74-77.

186. Goodwin (1990), p. 233. Also see Morrell, p. 181.

As part of his activities as *kanjin hijiri*, Gyōki was said to have visited Ise Shrine 伊勢神宮 and Usa Hachiman Shrine 宇佐八幡宮 in order to request assistance from their *kami*. Like the stories that describe Gyōki as the *kanjin hijiri* for Tōdaiji, these legends were only propagated in the late Heian and Kamakura Periods, unsurprisingly by affiliates of Tōdaiji and Ise Shrine. Chōgen visited Ise in 1186 accompanied by an entourage of sixty Tōdaiji monks in order to pray for the reconstruction of the Great Buddha Hall, and as part of his supplications, donated Buddhist relics.<sup>187</sup> While Chōgen was at Ise, he also supposedly dreamt of a conversation with the Inner Shrine's (Naikū 内宮) *kami*, Amaterasu 天照, which was interpreted as an omen that she agreed to bless the project. As a group, Tōdaiji monks altogether visited the shrine three times, where they copied the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (*Daihannyokyō* 大般若經), performed commemorative ceremonies, and recited sutras in order to secure Amaterasu's divine assistance.<sup>188</sup> Because the legends about Gyōki visiting Ise appear during this period, it seems that Chōgen or someone close to him manufactured this account to establish a precedent for Chōgen's own activities at Ise, much in the same way that Gyōki was invoked to justify the *kanjin* campaign in Chōgen's original campaign appeal.

The text that includes Gyōki's secret account of his visit to Ise, the *Gyōki bosatsu himon* 行基菩薩秘文<sup>189</sup> (hereafter *Himon*), was traditionally thought to be a record of his dying instructions. However, this document has been shown in large part to be a duplication

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187. Records of Chōgen's visit are included in the *Tōdaiji shuto sankei ise daijingu ki* 東大寺衆徒參詣伊勢大神宮記.

188. Saiki (2012), p. 154.

189. Hereafter, *Himon*.

of the *Ryōgu gyōmon shinshaku* 両宮形文深釈<sup>190</sup> (hereafter *Shinshaku*), another apocryphal text attributed to Kūkai. The text of the *Himon* consists of three parts: (1) Gyōki and Tachibana no Moroe's 橘諸兄 (684-757) visit to Ise (which corresponds to the opening text of the *Shinshaku*); (2) a legendary account of Gyōki donating relics to Ise (not featured in the *Shinshaku*); and (3) the full text of the first fascicle of the *Shinshaku*. Essentially, the entirety of the *Himon* is plagiarized from the *Shinshaku* with the exception of the discussion of Gyōki's donation of relics.<sup>191</sup>

The account of Gyōki offering relics to Ise grew over time in relation to expanding interest in the syncretism of *kami* and Buddhas (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合) in legends about the reconstruction of Tōdaiji. Descriptions of the connections between *kami* and Buddhas relating to Tōdaiji appear in several sources, including the *Nakatomi no harae kunge* 中臣祓訓解 (1191), the *Tōdaiji hachiman genki* 東大寺八幡験記, the *Tōdaiji kiroku* 東大寺記録 (compiled from 1317-1330), the *Genkō shakusho* 元享釈書, the *Tōdaiji engi* 東大寺縁起 (before 1337), and the *Tōdaiji engi ekotoba* 東大寺縁起絵詞 (compiled in 1337). The legend of Gyōki offering relics to Ise, not mentioned at all in the *Nakatomi no harae kunge*,

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190. The *Shinshaku* is known to be falsely attributed to Kūkai since some quotations derive from a document dated to 1320. Thus, the *Shinshaku*, too, must date at least from that time. The content of the document is related to Shingon-inflected Ryōbu Shintō 両部神道 doctrine, which, generally speaking, concerns the teachings of the *kami* of the Inner and Outer Ise Shrines as related to the Womb World (*taizōkai* 胎藏界) and Diamond World (*kongōkai* 金剛界) represented in the Mandala of the Two Worlds (*ryōbu mandara* 両部曼荼羅) of Shingon Buddhism. The *Shinshaku* endeavors to explain how the *gogyōmon* 御形文 patterns that adorn the buildings of Ise Shrine are related to Ryōbu Shinto doctrine (Yoneyama, p. 183-185).

191. Yoneyama, p. 185.

developed incrementally in these texts over time, reaching full maturity in the *Himon*.<sup>192</sup> The reasons for Gyōki's relic offering changed from account to account, but by the *Himon*, his relic offering was justified by a fanciful story about Emperor Shōmu seeing Amaterasu in a dream, prompting him to issue an imperial command for Gyōki to visit Ise.<sup>193</sup> The story of Gyōki's visit to Ise may not be completely fabricated – there is a reliable account of Gyōki's disciple, Dōgyō 道行, copying the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* at Ise in 758, which may suggest some affiliation between Ise and Gyōki. However, the legend of the details of his visit to Ise, including the donation of relics, grew only after Chōgen's reconstruction of Tōdaiji, suggesting that either Chōgen or someone close to him invented the legend, which expanded over time to become the full-fledged account found in the *Himon*.

The links between Ise and Tōdaiji via Gyōki also served the interests of the Chief Priests of the Ise Inner Shrine, who furthered a narrative starting in the 11th or 12th centuries that identified the *kami* of the Inner Shrine, Amaterasu, with both Mahāvairocana and the Japanese emperor. The roots of the connection between Ise and Tōdaiji date to 1060, when the Shingon monk Jōson 成尊 wrote a tract called the *Shingon fu hōsan yōshō* 真言付法纂抄:

Originally, among the eighty-four thousand settlements in Jambūdvīpa (Senbu 瞻部), Esoteric Buddhism (*himitsukyō* 秘密教) flourished only in a single, sunny valley.... A long time ago, Maricī<sup>194</sup> always resided in the Sun Palace (日宮 *nichigū*), eliminating troubles [caused by] the Asura King. Now,

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192. Yoneyama, p. 187-192.

193. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

194. Here written as “the bodhisattva Ikō 威光,” with a parenthetical note specifying that this deity is actually “Maricī, a transformation body of Mahāvairocana.”

Universally Shining Vajrasattva (Henjō kongo 遍照金剛, here an epithet for Kūkai) resides in the “land of the sun” (日域 *nichiiki*, i.e. Japan), adding to the joy of the Golden Wheel-Turning Sage King (*konrinshō* 金輪聖, i.e. the Japanese emperor). The name of the *kami* [of Japan] is “Shining in Heaven” (Amaterasu 天照); the name of the country [itself] is “the original land of the Buddha Mahāvairocana” (*Dainichi hongoku* 大日本国).<sup>195</sup> [Based on this] natural reasoning, this name [for the country] was naturally chosen.... It is clearly known that the compassion (*kaji* 加持) of Mahāvairocana extends throughout. How could [even] unenlightened persons not know this? Now, the true Buddha Sun (i.e. Mahāvairocana) again shines, guiding the destiny of the emperor.<sup>196</sup>

There are a number of metaphors constructed by the author in this passage designed to identify Buddhist deities and locales with real persons and places in Japan. In ancient Indian tales, the sun was conceived as a large disk known as the “sun palace” with a diameter of fifty-one *yojana*<sup>197</sup> inhabited by deities such as Maricī, the Indian goddess of the morning sun. Kūkai, here described as the human form of Vajrasattva (a transformation of Mahāvairocana in Esoteric thought), brought Esoteric Buddhism to Japan, “the land of the sun.” This sun imagery extends to the protector divinity of the country, Amaterasu, for which the Chinese characters mean “shining in heaven,” as well as the name of the country of Japan itself, “Dainichi,” which can alternatively refer to Mahāvairocana. Altogether, these metaphors are designed to correlate Amaterasu with Mahāvairocana, and the original ground of Buddhism with Japan.

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195. This is a play on words. Historically, the name for Japan was sometimes written the “Great Country of Japan,” but subdividing the four characters of that name slightly differently yields the meaning “the original country of Dainichi,” where Dainichi, *lit.* “Great Sun” is a common name for the Mahāvairocana Buddha. Thus, the author is making the point that Japan is the true home of Mahāvairocana since the very words used to signify the country could also be used to refer to this Buddha.

196. Reprinted in Saiki (2012), p. 154.

197. “日宮.” *DDB*.

This type of thought influenced the writings of the Chief Priests of the Ise Inner Shrine, who hailed from the Arakida 荒木田 clan. A passage from the diary of the Inner Shrine's Chief Priest (*Daijingū negi nobihira nikki* 太神宮禰宜延平日記), written in the latter half of the 11th or first part of the 12th century, is quoted in the *Tōdaiji yōroku*. The passage documents Tachibana no Moroe's visit to Ise Shrine, and Emperor Shōmu's subsequent encounter with a manifestation of the goddess Amaterasu:

In the third day of the eleventh month of the fourteenth year of the Tempyō Period (742), the Minister of the Right, Upper Second Rank, Tachibana no Moroe visited Ise Shrine as an emissary. Because a temple (i.e. Tōdaiji) would be built according to the wishes of the emperor (i.e. Shōmu), he went to pray. After his visit to the shrine, on the night of the fifteenth day of the eleventh month of the same year, a manifestation appeared before the emperor. A Jade Maiden radiating golden beams of light sat down and said, "This land is a divine country. Amaterasu (Shinmei 神明) in particular should be venerated. Also, the sun is Mahāvairocana (Dainichi nyōrai 大日如来). His original ground is Vairocana Buddha (毘盧遮那仏). All sentient beings attain enlightenment as a result of his principle, and should take refuge in the Buddha's dharma." After [the emperor] had this dream, he experienced an increasing, unshakable aspiration for enlightenment. The temple that was being planned according to the wishes of the emperor was [none other than] Tōdaiji.<sup>198</sup>

The jade maiden who appears before the emperor in this Chief Priest's diary entry is named "Shinmei," the "Illuminating Deity," but clearly means Amaterasu, "Shining in Heaven." The purpose of the story appears to be the same as Jōson's explanation above: to equate Amaterasu with Dainichi, and Dainichi with Mahāvairocana. Another version of this diary, the *Daijingu shozō jiki* 太神宮諸雜事記, also makes these connections.

The identification between Amaterasu and Mahāvairocana continued to be noted in the writings of other Esoteric monks, such as the *Records of Initiation* (*Denjuki* 伝受記) by

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198. Reprinted in Saiki (2012), p. 154.

the Daigoji Sanbōin monk, Shōkaku 勝覚 (1057-1129). Discussing a statue of Avalokiteśvara that was installed as the main object of worship within the imperial palace, Shōkaku remarked:

Facing [the statue] of Avalokiteśvara, its appearance changes into the disk of the sun, and what is worshipped is the original vow of the Golden Wheel-Turning King (i.e. the Japanese emperor as the ideal Buddhist monarch). The sun is Amaterasu's divine palace. Amaterasu's divine mirror (*naishidokoro* 内侍所), and Amaterasu herself are the same body with different names. Amaterasu is the Empress of the Sun (日天子 *nittenshi*) and her original ground is Mahāvairocana (Dainichi nyōrai).<sup>199</sup>

The identification between Amaterasu and Mahāvairocana gradually became an established idea and writings from Ise emphasized even more complex relationships between the two deities within the Ryōbu Shintō framework. In the latter 12th century, for example, a manual known as the *Amaterasu ōkami giki* 天照大神儀軌 says:

“[When] Vairocana of the Avatamsaka World was in the Form Realm (*shikikai* 色界),<sup>200</sup> he began meditating in the Heaven of the Followers of Brahma (梵衆天 *bonshu ten*).<sup>201</sup> His body grew half a *yojana* and endured for one kalpa. In the beginning (i.e. a previous life) he was a great king (in Japan) who had guarded the vow [to save all sentient beings], therefore [his] name was “Shining (Deity of) Heaven” (Shōkōten 照皇天), and this realm's (i.e. Japan's) name is the “Inner Shrine of Ise” (Tenshōkō daijingū 天照皇大神宮). Also, when revering the name of Mahāvairocana (Dainichi henjō zon 大日遍照尊), one [should] add the name “Amaterasu” 天照.<sup>202</sup>

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199. Reprinted in Saiki (2012), p. 154.

200. The second of three realms that make up the world in which existence is pure materiality, free from the afflictions of the desire realm where humans abide (*DDB*).

201. “The first level of the first of the four meditation heavens 四禪天 of the form realm 色界” (*DDB*).

202. Reprinted in Saiki (2012), p. 155.

By this point, the ambitions of Ise writers had expanded to include identifications between Amaterasu and the emperor, as well as Ise Shrine and the Japanese realm. According to the author, in a previous life, Mahāvairocana was a king with the name, “Shōkōten,” which happens to be an alternative rendering of “Amaterasu.” The text implies that this king was a former Japanese emperor, who was reborn as Vairocana in a later life. Because of that king’s bodhisattva vow, Japan came to be known by a similar name (“Tenshōkō daijingu”), which also happened to be another name for the Inner Shrine of Ise. Thus, the passage tells us how Amaterasu became Japan’s primary deity, and why Ise Shrine is indistinguishable from the very land of Japan itself.

From the 11th to the 12th centuries, Ise Shrine continued to emphasize the relation between Amaterasu and the emperor. For example, in 1031, Amaterasu’s oracle at Ise Shrine responded to the head of the office in charge of the Imperial Princess who serves at Ise Shrine (*saigū ryōtō* 齋宮寮頭), Fujiwara Sukemichi 藤原相通, who sought to annul his marriage, an unprecedented request for an individual in his position. According to the *Shōyūki* 小右記, the oracle said that this sort of unfortunate incident was due in recent years to the negligence of the nobles and the emperor, who did not properly revere Amaterasu. The oracle stressed that the emperor was the grandson of Amaterasu, and enjoyed her protection.<sup>203</sup>

The above texts from Ise and related sources in the 11th and 12th centuries successfully increased the prestige of the Inner Shrine’s deity, Amaterasu, by identifying her with Mahāvairocana, who in turn was associated with Emperor Shōmu after his construction of the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji. Because Tōdaiji’s Great Buddha was the instantiation of

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203. *Shōyūki*, Vol. 9, p. 29; See Saiki (2012), p. 155-156.



Mahāvairocana in Japan and originally constructed by Shōmu, Ise's Chief Priests from the Arakida clan took great interest in cultivating relations between the two institutions. This also helps to explain Chōgen and other Tōdaiji monks' trips to Ise to pay homage to Amaterasu and seek blessings for the temple's reconstruction.

While these accounts began before Chōgen's time, the narrative that introduced Gyōki as the original *kanjin hijiri* for Tōdaiji only began during Chōgen's own *kanjin* campaign, though they did reinforce the earlier accounts of a long-standing relationship between Tōdaiji and Ise. Over time, however, those loyal to Chōgen, Ise, and Tōdaiji expanded these legends, since they benefited all three simultaneously.

## Conclusions

In many ways, Chōgen's success in rebuilding Tōdaiji owed to his experiences as a foreign traveler in China. Many of the technological hardships Chōgen overcame recasting the Great Buddha and redesigning the temple's halls were a result of knowledge and personal connections he amassed during his voyages. Without the assistance of Chen Heqing and other Chinese craftsmen, many aspects of the project would probably have never been possible.

Chōgen also overcame a series of economic setbacks managing the estates that provided raw materials and revenues for reconstructing Tōdaiji. His success partially owed to a coherent religious message Chōgen broadcast across the country through the *bessho* he founded on those estates: by working in service of the Tōdaiji reconstruction, salvation in Amitābha's Pure Land is guaranteed. Chōgen's accomplishment also owed to his good works, which benefitted the local populations near his estates, earning much credit for

Chōgen and his endeavors. Finally, Chōgen's project benefitted from a mythological narrative that connected the deities of Tōdaiji and Ise Shrine with the Japanese emperor, providing a sense of inevitability to the temple's reconstruction.

In many ways, a centrally powerful government administration did not exist in Japan prior to Chōgen's development of estates, construction of *bessho*, and investment in public works projects. These endeavors brought stability to outlying provinces and connected them to the administrative center for the first time. Thus, Chōgen's *kanjin* activities can be viewed as some of the first large scale development projects for regions outside the capital, projects that were critical to the restoration of the country after a period of disunion.

## **Chapter 4.**

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### **Means: Chōgen's Pure Land Network**

The Tōdaiji *bessho* provided an infrastructure for Chōgen to bring Pure Land Buddhism to outlying provinces where monks representing the religious establishment had rarely shown interest in community organization. As Pure Land temples, Chōgen's *bessho* provided those who worked or lived near the Tōdaiji estates the opportunity to participate in rites that guaranteed their salvation in Amitābha's Western Paradise. As outposts of Tōdaiji, the *bessho* connected these communities to the reanimation of the Great Buddha.

The spiritual connections promised to Amitābha and the Great Buddha by Chōgen amounted to religious incentives to participate in Chōgen's economic development, construction, and good works projects. Participants can be divided into two tiers: (1) an "inner network" of Chōgen's closest disciples, all of whom were monastics, perhaps including some nuns, and some who doubled as Buddhist artisans and estate managers; and (2) an "outer network" of donors and *bessho* congregations. Members of the inner network were differentiated by their adoption of "Amidabutsu" 阿弥陀仏 names either handed down by Chōgen himself or chosen by each member individually. These names contained a unique identifier in the prefix, and the group identifier "Amidabutsu" in the suffix, not dissimilar from monks' ordination names, which always implicitly begin with the surname "Shaku" 釈 for "Śākyamuni" and end with a unique two-character name. Members of Chōgen's inner network participated in lengthy rituals dedicated to Amitābha, such as multi-day recitations of the Buddha's name. Members of the outer network had no unique religious names, but associated through participation in less intensive group recitations of the *nembutsu* at

Chōgen's *bessho*. The names of the Amidabutsu disciples in the inner network and donors in the outer network were often recorded on “*kechien*” 結縁 lists inserted into Amitābha statues in order to establish spiritual links between those individuals and Amitābha. Some of these lists have been recovered, providing us with a glimpse of the extent of Chōgen's relationships.

Chōgen's two-tiered network was similar to the one overseen by Zhili at Yanqingsi in Ningbo, a religious organization still active in the mid- and late-12th century when Chōgen visited the city. Zhili's network was also divided between two tiers, one for monks who engaged in three-year commitments to meditation in the Hall for Sixteen Visualizations at the temple, and another for common laypersons, who took part in periodic recitation rituals at the temple organized for the general community. While Chōgen never constructed a Hall for Sixteen Visualizations, the two tiers of his network were likewise differentiated by the devotional rigor expected on behalf of the network's members. All the members of Chōgen's inner network appear to have participated in multi-day recitations of Amitābha's name. According to documents installed in an Amitābha statue at Kōzenji (*Kōzenji amidabutsuzō tainai monjo* 興善寺阿弥陀仏像胎内文書, ca. 1204), Chōgen's lay devotees were only expected to chant the *nembutsu* ten, one hundred, or one thousand times. However, those with Amidabutsu names were expected to chant ten thousand, several tens of thousands, or even one million times.<sup>1</sup>

Chōgen's Amidabutsu names share much in common with the autonyms used by the lay religious devotees known as the “People of the Way” in China during the Southern Song.

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1. Itō, p. 88.

Those autonyms identified individuals as members of religious societies that undertook merit-generating activities. They adopted the lay Buddhist precepts, built private chapels in the countryside, and performed good works projects such as bridge building. Chōgen and his closest disciples also used autonyms (in this case Amidabutsu names) in order to identify their group, built temples in the provinces in the form of the Tōdaiji *bessho*, and performed good works. Since Chōgen traveled extensively around southern China at the time the activism of the People of the Way began to spread, it is possible that Chōgen's idea for Amidabutsu names derived from the autonyms first used by the People of the Way.

Chōgen's networking activities were motivated by the episodes he witnessed at Ayuwangshan 阿育王山 outside of Ningbo, where common people performed long pilgrimages involving thousands of prostrations up the mountain to worship the temple's famous Buddhist relic. After witnessing the power of relic devotion at Ayuwangshan, Chōgen desired to introduce relics to his congregations of common devotees at the *bessho*, a first in Japan since relics historically had been owned and circulated entirely among the elite. He installed reliquaries at the *bessho*, thereby establishing a connection between his congregations and the Great Buddha, which also housed more than eighty relics that empowered the statue as a living deity. Those relics transformed the statue quite literally into the Buddha's body in the minds of Chōgen's contemporaries. Thus, by installing reliquaries at the *bessho*, Chōgen was bringing the Buddha's body to his congregations in the provinces, and at the same time bringing his outer network closer to the power and grace of the Buddha.

### **Chōgen's inner network and the Amidabutsu autonyms**

In the beginning, Chōgen's inner network only included his closest confidants, but over time, the network grew in proportion to the increasing number of artisans and managers he needed for the Tōdaiji reconstruction. The members of the inner network were bound both by their common cause to rebuild Tōdaiji and its Great Buddha, and through their devotion to Pure Land practice.

The individuals in the inner network were bestowed autonyms that included the suffix "Amidabutsu." The purpose of this naming practice was to create a collective identity for Chōgen's devotees, while emphasizing the merit earned through their contributions and their shared aspiration to attain salvation through Amitābha's grace. These autonyms also bound each member of the inner network to Chōgen personally. Chōgen adopted the most exalted name for himself, "Namu-Amidabutsu" 南無阿彌陀仏 or "Homage to Amitābha Buddha," the phrase chanted when Pure Land disciples call to Amitābha in Japanese. In this way, Chōgen established himself at the center of his network as the figurative emanation of Amitābha Buddha. The Amidabutsu names given to his disciples always followed the format "X-Amidabutsu," where X was a character with strong Buddhist connotations, perhaps borrowed from one or several sutras. The naming practice thus reinforced that each member was also an emanation of Amitābha. However, since their names were qualified by an additional character, the names also subtly implied that their identities owed to Chōgen-Amidābha, who was the "true" manifestation of Amitābha Buddha in this world.

### *Documentation of Amidabutsu names*

There are a few unrelated examples of monks or nuns using Amidabutsu names in Japan prior to Chōgen's time, but no precedents for granting Amidabutsu autonyms in order to foster a common identity among Buddhist disciples. In the *Sazenshū*, dated to 1202, Chōgen says he began bestowing Amidabutsu names to the high and low twenty years earlier, which would place the starting date for the naming practice around 1183. Amidabutsu names discovered in sources prior to 1183 include a: (1) Shin-Amidabutsu 新 — and Zen-Amidabutsu 前 — active at Hōshōji 法成寺 in 1023, (2) Koku-Amidabutsu 黒 — from a copied sutra at the Shōsōin 正倉院 dated 1087, (3) Hō-Amidabutsu 法 — who donated fields to the Tōdaiji Kaidanin 戒壇院 in 1137, and (4) Namu-Amidabutsu 南無 — who copied the *Commentary on the Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra* (*Yugaronshō* 瑜伽論抄) in 1172. These examples appear unrelated to one another and to Chōgen, but they do show that the idea of using Amidabutsu names existed prior to Chōgen's time. Whether Chōgen was familiar with these previous cases is unclear. However, unlike Chōgen's names, which were used to create a group identity among the members of his network, these names appear to have been adopted by individual monks for private reasons.<sup>2</sup>

The isolated examples above are the only incidents of Amidabutsu names recorded before for the formation of Chōgen's network, but the calling of Amitābha's name by ecclesiastics and devout laypersons who sought rebirth in his Pure Land had long been a popular practice, propagated both within institutions and by itinerant preachers such as Kūya 空也 (903-972), who brought *nembutsu* chanting and dancing routines to outlying regions of

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2. Itō, p. 81.

the country. According to the *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語, Kūya would call Amitābha's name in a loud voice as a means to attract followers. Chōgen's *nembutsu* procedures also stressed the need to forcefully intone the Buddha's name.<sup>3</sup> By the time Chōgen bestowed Amidabutsu names on his disciples, Pure Land practice was a widespread feature of Buddhist devotion in Japan for monks and laypersons alike.

The Amidabutsu names of Chōgen's disciples are recorded in a variety of sources, including Chōgen's *Sazenshū*, Kanezane's *Gyokuyō*, the *Tōdaiji zōryū kuyōki* 東大寺造立供養記, and Tōdaiji estate documents.<sup>4</sup> Amidabutsu names were also listed in dedicatory inscriptions installed within statues, reliquaries, and other mementos created by Chōgen and his disciples. Members of Chōgen's inner network often used their Amidabutsu names in place of their ordination names. This is the case, for example, at the end of the stele erected for Chōgen's Sayama pond restoration, in which the Amidabutsu names of several of Chōgen's closest associates are listed.<sup>5</sup> This can also be seen in a *dhāraṇī* sutra inserted into the *agyō* 阿形 (open mouth) statue of the Vajra-welding guardian (Kongōrikishi 金剛力士) at the Great South Gate (Nandaimon 南大門) at Tōdaiji, and a vajra ink drawing (*kongōsho bokusho* 金剛杵墨書) included in the same statue that contains the Amidabutsu names of sculpture apprentices (*shōbusshi* 小仏師), head carpenters (*banshō* 番匠), and ritual

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3. Itō, p. 89-90.

4. Mizukami, p. 340-341. Examples of such estate documents include the *Suō amidabutsu shiryō denbaku chūmon* 周防阿弥陀仏寺領田畠注文.

5. According to the Sayama reservoir stele, the renovations were completed by: "The Japanese monk and *Daikanjin* who constructed (Tō)daiji, Namu-Amidabutsu 南無阿弥陀仏; Assistant *kanjin ācārya* Ban-Amidabutsu 鑾阿弥陀仏; Jō-Amidabutsu 浄阿弥陀仏; [and] Jun-Amidabutsu 順阿弥陀仏" (text reprinted in Harada, p. 206).



officials.<sup>6</sup> Yuishin Itō lists fourteen documents that reference Chōgen's disciples by their Amidabutsu names and the specific names contained in the lists.<sup>7</sup> Though Amidabutsu names continued to be used after Chōgen's death by his followers, after the completion of Tōdaiji and the fragmentation of Chōgen's inner network, Amidabutsu names were also adopted by other groups, including the Pure Land sectarian movement that emerged in the early Kamakura Period. For these reasons, only materials dated prior to 1206, the year of Chōgen's death, can properly be considered as evidence of Amidabutsu names connected with Chōgen.<sup>8</sup>

What documentation exists that the practice of bestowing Amidabutsu names on disciples originated with Chōgen? The earliest corroboration of the claim that Chōgen first used Amidabutsu autonyms is Jien's 慈円 (1155-1225) history of Japan, the *Gukanshō* 愚管抄 (ca. 1220). Later biographical accounts of Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212) also make this claim, including the *Kurodani shōnin den* 黒谷上人伝 (ca. 1283-1295) and *Hōnen shōnin denki* 法然上人伝記 (ca. 1312). Another Hōnen biography, the *Honchō soshi denki ekotoba* 本朝祖師伝記絵詞 (1237) specifically states that the use of Amidabutsu names was correlated with the *kanjin* campaign for the Great Buddha. While most biographies of Hōnen agree on this point,<sup>9</sup> a few differ. The *Genkū shōnin shinikki* 源空聖人私日記 (ca. 1237-1256), for example, argues that the Tendai abbot Kenshin 顕真 began the practice and chose prefix

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6. Harada, p. 209.

7. Itō, p. 82-85

8. Ishida, p. 99.

9. Itō, p. 79.

characters for his Amidabutsu names from the *Lotus Sutra*. There is little supporting evidence to bear out this conclusion, though.<sup>10</sup>

The 1183 starting date for Chōgen's adoption of Amidabutsu names mentioned in the *Sazenshū* seems plausible since it correlates with the timeframe for the casting of the Great Buddha. However, the earliest documentary evidence of Chōgen using his own Amidabutsu name, "Namu-Amidabutsu," is an inscription on an armrest (*kyōsoku* 脇息) from Tōdaiji dated to 1187. The first record of Amidabutsu names among his disciples is an inscription on a Maitreya statue<sup>11</sup> from the Sambōin at Daigoji dated to 1192 that mentions "An-Amidabutsu" 安-, the name adopted by Kaikei 快慶, who was one of Chōgen's sculptors responsible for Buddhist statues installed at Tōdaiji and the *bessho*.<sup>12</sup>

Based on a list of Amidabutsu names connected with Chōgen contained within an Amitābha statue<sup>13</sup> from Kengōin 遣迎院 in Kyōto, the adoption of Chōgen's autonyms may have significantly expanded in scope from circa 1194. One of the pages recovered from that statue<sup>14</sup> contains a line with the text "fifth year of the Kenkyū Era" (建久五年), which corresponds to the year 1194. There are only thirty-eight names included on that page, and none of them are Amidabutsu names. However, Amidabutsu names appear with increasing frequency in the subsequent pages of the list. Since all of the Amidabutsu names were added

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10. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

11. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 1, p. 85-89.

12. Ishida, p. 100.

13. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 1, p. 101-170.

14. Page seven of the third booklet.

after the line written in 1194, we can surmise that many of Chōgen's disciples only adopted their Amidabutsu names from this year forward.<sup>15</sup> In all, about one hundred and thirty Amidabutsu names appear on the Kengōin list.<sup>16</sup>

### *Rationale and Signification of Chōgen's Amidabutsu naming practice*

There are several theories regarding the selection of the prefix characters for Chōgen's Amidabutsu names. Following an explanation given in the *Genkū shōnin shinikki*, Itō Yuishin 伊藤唯真 hypothesized that the prefix characters all originated from the *Lotus Sutra*.<sup>17</sup> Many of the prefixes used by Chōgen's Amidabutsu disciples do appear in the *Lotus Sutra*, but not all, including “Ban” 鑁,<sup>18</sup> the prefix for the Amidabutsu name of one of Chōgen's *kanjin* assistants recorded in the Sayama Pond Stele. Moreover, many of the characters chosen as prefixes were commonly used in Buddhist literature, making it difficult,

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15. Ishida, p. 100. There are alternative explanations, as well. The Kengōin list contains many members of Chōgen's network, but the Amitābha statue in which it was inserted was not exclusively sponsored by Chōgen. While we would expect that Chōgen's closest disciples with Amidabutsu names would appear at the forefront of a list composed by Chōgen himself, there may have been some other rationale for the list's composers to group all of Chōgen's disciples with Amidabutsu names later in the document.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

17. Itō, p. 80. Itō devised this theory in an era before digitized resources, however, and was unable to make an exhaustive search.

18. The character “Ban” is a transliteration of the seed syllable “*vaṃ*,” and is the seed syllable for Mahāvairocana in the Vajradhātu. According to Itō's research, Ban-amida-butsu was active on Kōyasan, and so the name probably derives from an esoteric source. The same character appears in certain *dhāraṇī* documents that say it generates the Lotus Sections (蓮華部) of the Mandalas of the Two Worlds (see, for example, the *Foding zhushengxin po diyu zhuan yezhang chu sanjie mimi tuoluoni* 佛頂尊勝心破地獄轉業障出三界祕密陀羅尼 translated by Subhakarasiṃha), so there may yet be some connection to the *Lotus Sutra*.

if not impossible, to isolate a single origin text for all of the characters. Hiroto Yokouchi has speculated that Chōgen chose different prefix characters as a way of classifying his disciples according to the level and grade of their eventual rebirth in the Pure Land, in effect creating a hierarchy based on the circumstances in which they would be saved by Amitābha.<sup>19</sup>

Chōgen's rationale for styling himself after Amitābha and bestowing Amidabutsu names on his disciples is suggested in the *Hishō* 祕鈔, a work by the Shingon monk, Shōken 勝賢 (1138-1196), one of Chōgen's closest associates from the Daigoji Sambōin 醍醐寺三寶院.<sup>20</sup> Shōken says there were "four saints" of the original construction of the Great Buddha: (1) Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇, who sponsored the temple; (2) the Indian monk Bodhisena (*J. Bodaisenna* 菩提僊那), who traveled to Japan to found the Kegon school and performed the original eye-opening ceremony of the *Great Buddha*;<sup>21</sup> (3) Gyōki 行基, the wandering ascetic who allegedly served as the original Tōdaiji *kanjin hijiri*; and (4) Rōben 良弁, the Kegon monk who oversaw the original construction of the *Great Buddha*.<sup>22</sup> Shōken treats these four, respectively, as the emanation bodies of four bodhisattvas, (1) Avalokiteśvara (*J. Kannon* 観

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19. Yokouchi, p. 575.

20. The Sambōin is the lowest of three complexes that form Daigoji temple. The Sambōin is located at the base of Mt. Daigo (Daigosan 醍醐山) along with the Shimo daigo 下醍醐 complex, while the Kami daigo 上醍醐 complex sits at the top of the mountain.

21. *Todaiji yōroku*, p. 46-50.

22. This list of four saints is different from the list describing the *zushi* mentioned in the *Sazenshū*. However, there are similarities. Within this lineage, Bodhisena assumes a function similar to the Chinese monk Ganjin, since both represent the transmission of Buddhism from India, through China, to Japan. Likewise, both Rōben and Kūkai are Buddhist patriarchs of the Kegon 華嚴 and Shingon schools, respectively. Both schools were influential at Tōdaiji. Finally, if one interprets the appearance of Shōtoku taishi in the *zushi* as a reference to Shōmu, then both the *zushi* and Shōken's list pay homage to Emperor Shōmu as the Tōdaiji founder.

音), (2) Samantabhadra (*J. Fugen* 普賢), (3) Mañjuśrī (*J. Monju* 文殊), and (4) Maitreya (*J. Miroku* 弥勒). Each of these four bodhisattvas, in turn, are featured as emanations of Mahāvairocana in the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Petals* 中台八葉院, the central configuration (or “hall”) of the *Womb World Mandala*.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, these are the same four bodhisattvas said to have attended Śākyamuni’s dharma lectures on Vulture Peak according to some sutras.<sup>24</sup> In the same tract, Shōken describes Japan as the miraculous land illuminated by the rays of Śākyamuni emanating from Tokharestan (*J. Gesshikoku* 月支国),<sup>25</sup> a synonym for the Buddha’s homeland.

By identifying the four historical figures responsible for the building of the original Great Buddha with four bodhisattvas who appeared at Śākyamuni’s congregation on Vulture Peak, Shōken implies that the “four saints” were not only active at Tōdaiji in Japan, but also active at the location of the original dissemination of Buddhism in India. Combined with his assertion that Japan is a miraculous land illuminated by Śākyamuni’s teachings, Shōken seems to be saying that Japan’s status as a repository of the Buddha’s dharma is virtually the equal of India. According to Shōken, this is because the bodhisattvas who heard

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23. The *Womb World Mandala* (*Taizōkai mandara* 胎藏界曼荼羅) is based on Chapter 2 of the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* (*Dainichikyō* 大日經), one of the central texts of the Shingon School. The mandala envisions all deities and sentient beings as emanations of Mahāvairocana, who sits in the center of the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Petals*. See ten Grotenhuis, p. 58-77.

24. Inamoto, p. 151. Among other Mahāyāna sutras, the *Heart Sutra*, *Lotus Sutra*, and *Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sūtra* are said to have been delivered on Vulture Peak.

25. Tokharestan was the origin of early Buddhist travelers to China, and the King of Tokharestan was one of the first great sponsors of the religion. Here the name just functions as a synonym for “India,” perhaps adding an element of exoticism for Japanese readers at the time.

Śākyamuni's sermons later manifested themselves in Japan in order to construct Tōdaiji, which became the center of Buddhism for the country, much as Vulture Peak served as the center for the spread of Buddhism in India. Such an explanation comes close to theories of "traces of the original ground" (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹), popular in medieval times, that correlated indigenous Japanese deities (*kami* 神) with the manifestation of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Shōken's case, the original ground is the four bodhisattvas that represent Buddhism's origin, and the traces are the "four saints" of Tōdaiji.

Another way to understand Shōken's treatise is to focus on the identity of the four bodhisattvas as emanations of Mahāvairocana from the *Womb World Mandala*. These bodhisattvas, embodied as the "four saints," brought Mahāvairocana to Japan by forging his body as the Tōdaiji Great Buddha. According to this interpretation, Japan became Mahāvairocana's new "homeland," thereby reversing the primary and secondary statuses of India and Japan in the traditional Buddhist geographical hierarchy. Japan became the "original ground" and India the "traces," since Mahāvairocana had departed India and chosen Japan as the site for his current manifestation. By medieval times, both lines of thought (India as center and Japan as periphery, and Japan as center and India as periphery) were argued, though it is unclear which Shōken favored.

As mentioned, Shōken was Chōgen's close associate, and given their relationship, it seems likely that the identifications discussed in the *Hishō* between the four "saints" of Tōdaiji and the four bodhisattvas from the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Pedals* of the *Womb World Mandala* were also understood by Chōgen, if not devised by him in the first place. If so, then it seems natural that Chōgen would also have sought identification with a deity from the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Pedals* in order to establish himself as the "fifth saint" of

Tōdaiji. By identifying himself with another deity from the same source, he would confirm his place in the lineage of Tōdaiji's architects and further legitimize his role as *kanjin hijiri*. In addition to the four bodhisattvas that Shōken identified with the “four saints” of Tōdaiji, the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Pedals* also includes the four directional Buddhas: (1) Ratnaketu (*J. Hōtō 寶幢*, Buddha of the East), (2) Saṃkusumitarāja (*J. Kaifukeō 開敷華王*, Buddha of the South), (3) Divyadundubhi meghanirghoṣa (*J. Kuon 鼓音*, Buddha of the North), and (4) Amitābha, (here named “Amitāyus,” *J. Muryōju 無量壽*, Buddha of the West).<sup>26</sup> Of these, Amitābha was by far the most well known and popular of the directional Buddhas, and of course the central deity of worship in the Pure Land practices Chōgen had undertaken as a youth, observed at Yanqingsi in China, and instituted at the Kōyasan shinbessho. Thus, if Chōgen had wanted to identify himself with another deity from the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Pedals* in order to establish his credentials as the “fifth saint” of Tōdaiji, then Amitābha was the obvious choice.

The teaching of the *Womb World Mandala* is that all sentient beings, including the deities of the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Pedals*, are emanations of the Buddha's eternal body, symbolized by Mahāvairocana. Thus, by the transitive property, when Chōgen adopted the name “Namu-Amidabutsu” and identified himself with Amitābha, he was also identifying himself as Mahāvairocana. The same was true of his disciples. In this way, all the members of Chōgen's inner network were not only connected with Chōgen, but also Amitābha, Mahāvairocana, and through these deities, one another. The identification with

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26. See ten Grotenhuis, p. 61 for a fuller explication of the deities of the *Hall of the Central Dais Eight Petals* and their relationship to the other structures in the Womb World Mandala.

Mahāvairocana was particularly important, since the purpose of recasting the Great Buddha was to reactivate Mahāvairocana's power in Japan. Thus, as Chōgen's disciples assisted in the construction of the new statue, they simultaneously fulfilled their identities as emanations of Mahāvairocana, and grew closer to achieving enlightenment.

*Incorporation of Pure Land Buddhism in Shingon by Chōgen and his predecessors*

Chōgen and Shōken's thought identifying Amitābha and Mahāvairocana was the culmination of centuries of Pure Land practice within Esoteric Buddhist circles. Chōgen was probably most directly influenced by Kakuban, but monks from Tōji 東寺 and Kōyasan 高野山 had long sought an inclusive approach to Buddhism that fused disparate strands of doctrine and practice.<sup>27</sup>

During the Heian Period, Shingon monks routinely sought rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land upon their deaths. The Tōji abbot Kanken 寛賢 (853-925) and Kōyasan abbot Mukū 無空 (?-918) practiced the continuous recitation of the *nembutsu* in order to achieve Pure Land rebirth according to the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* 日本往生極樂 and *Konjaku monogatari*. Likewise, Jōshō 定昭 (906-983), who served as abbot of Tōji, Kōfukuji, and Kōyasan,

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27. Many scholars have noted, more generally, that Buddhist sectarianism was not a feature of Heian and Kamakura Buddhism, despite later sectarian scholarship that tends to overemphasize the influence of "Kamakura New Buddhism" (e.g. Jōdo-shinshū 浄土真宗, Rinzai Zen 臨済禅, Sōtō Zen 曹洞禅, etc.) on the religious landscape of the period (see Goodwin, 1994, p. 8-9; Kuroda, 1980; Taira, p. 290; Morrell, p. 9-10). Chōgen's Pure Land Buddhism was the opposite of sectarian in its inclusive approach, but even the so-called sectarian Pure Land groups shared much in common with the *kenmitsu* schools. Eisai, the founder of Rinzai Zen, was a close associate of Chōgen and succeeded him as *kanjin hijiri* for Tōdaiji after Chōgen's death. Hōnen, founder of Jōdoshū 浄土宗, also advocated esoteric rituals, which tends to counter the narrative that he exclusively stressed the *nembutsu* (Goodwin, 1994, p. 9).



formed mudra and chanted mantra as his death drew near in order to invoke Amitābha's grace according to the *Shūi ōjōden* 拾遺往生伝. Additionally, the Tōdaiji abbot Jinkaku 深覺 (955-1003) secluded himself on Kōyasan in order to limit distractions that hindered his Pure Land practice. Finally, thirty-eight Shingon monks are recorded as attaining Pure Land rebirths in the *Kōyasan Records of Rebirth* (*Kōyasan ōjōden* 高野山往生伝) over the century that spanned the lives of the monks Kyōkai 教懷 (1001-1093) through Shōin 証印 (d. 1187).<sup>28</sup>

In many cases, Pure Land and Shingon practices were combined. For example, recitation of the *Three Pure Land Sutras* could accompany Shingon rituals such as the recitation of Amitābha's mantra, various *dhāraṇī*, the “a” seed syllable, and so on. The Esoteric divinity Āryācalanātha (*J. Fudōson* 不動尊) was worshipped specifically to protect practitioners from evil karma that might serve as an obstacle to Pure Land rebirth. According to the *Kōyasan Records of Rebirth*, those who suffered from incurable diseases were recommended to perform an eye-opening ceremony for one-hundred drawings of Āryācalanātha in order to ensure Amitābha's appearance upon their deaths.<sup>29</sup>

The focus on attaining Amitābha's Pure Land upon death by Shingon practitioners at first glance would seem to run contrary to Kūkai's stated goal of Shingon practice: to attain Buddhahood in this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛). However, the emphasis on this goal to the exclusion of others, a feature of “pure esotericism” (*junmitsu* 純密), was in many ways a later sectarian concept that overlooked the significance of Pure Land worship within

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28. Abé (2002), p. 39-40.

29. Abé (2002), p. 40.

Shingon practice during the *insei* and Kamakura Periods. In the version of Shingon Buddhism Kūkai himself introduced to Japan, a large section of so called “mixed Esoteric sutras” (*zatsubu shingonkyō* 雜部眞言經) included texts dedicated to deities worshipped in the exoteric traditions, such as Bhaiṣajyaguru (Yakushi 藥師) and Amitābha, who were already significant in Japanese Buddhist worship prior to Kūkai’s importation of Esoteric Buddhism from China.<sup>30</sup> Many of these texts served as a way to introduce Esoteric practice into the Nara Buddhist “schools,” the earliest academic studies of Buddhism in Japan.<sup>31</sup> One such example includes the foremost commentary on the *Scripture that Transcends the Principle* (*S. Prajñāpāramitā-naya-śatapañcaśatikā*, *J. Rishukyō* 理趣經), the *Hannya haramitta rishushaku* 般若波羅蜜多理趣釋, translated by Amogavajra (705-774). In this commentary’s Chapter on the “Assembly of the Transcendence of the Principle of Avalokiteśvara” (Kanjizai bosatsu 觀自在菩薩), the deity known as Bhagavān Svabhāvaśuddha Tathāgata (Toku jishō shōjō hosshō nyorai 得自性清淨法性如來) is described as the union of Amitābha of the Pure Land and Avalokiteśvara of this defiled world. If the deity’s seed syllable, *hrīḥ* (*J. kiriku* キリク), is recited, Avalokiteśvara will protect the practitioner from all dangers and diseases in this world, and Amitābha will ensure Pure Land rebirth in the highest level of the highest grade in the next.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the commentary

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30. Abé (2002), p. 41. Such texts are listed in Kūkai’s record of Shingon texts recommended for study by Shingon practitioners (*Shingon shū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku* 眞言宗所学経律論目録).

31. The Six Nara “Schools” were more akin to academic study groups of six Buddhist doctrinal traditions: Hossō 法相宗, Jōjitsu 成実, Kegon 華嚴, Kusha 俱舍, Ritsu 律, and Sanron 三論. They continued to exert influence through medieval times and beyond.

32. T19, n. 1003, p. 612bc. See Abé (2002), p. 41.

introduces the Esoteric practice of reciting seed syllables in order to invoke deities of longstanding significance within Mahāyāna Buddhism. Another example is the *Commentary on the Method of Contemplation and Veneration of Amitābha Tathāgata* (*Muryōju Nyorai kangyō kuyō giki* 無量壽如來觀行供養儀軌), which was also translated by Amogavajra and served as a basis for some of Kūkai's own rituals. According to that text, by practicing the Three Mysteries of body, speech, and mind,<sup>33</sup> one can obtain rebirth in the highest level of the highest grade of Amitābha's Pure Land:

By practicing the Gates of the Three Mysteries (三密門) and mindfulness of Amitābha Buddha (念佛三昧), one will be reborn in the Pure Land and attain entrance to the stage of determination to attain enlightenment (正位).... Because of this teaching, if one practices correct mindfulness [of Amitābha Buddha], one will certainly be reborn in the highest level of the highest grade of the Pure Land and attain the first ground [of the ten *bhūmi*]. If householders or monastics vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, they should first gain entrance to the mandala (入曼荼羅)<sup>34</sup> and receive the *kanjō* baptism (灌頂). After this they should also receive the explanations of the [associated] chants from an instructor.<sup>35</sup>

In both examples, the texts' translator, Amogavajra, and later, Kūkai, advanced a theory of Shingon that combined various deities and techniques that aimed to benefit one in this life

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33. The Shingon practices of mudra, mantra, and mandala.

34. "Entrance to the mandala" is a Shingon technical term that refers to the first four of the five *samaya* (*J. goshu sanmaiya* 五種三昧耶), which function as precept bonds formed by a practitioner with esoteric deities. The first four of the five *samaya* include (1) viewing the esoteric mandala, but not yet receiving corresponding mantra or mudra associated with the mandalic deities; (2) viewing the seats of the mandalic deities and pronouncing their names, as well as practicing the associated mantra and mudra; (3) after viewing the mandala, receiving teachings of various methods for associated practices; and (4) practicing Shingon techniques in order to achieve mastery (Nakamura, p. 364; Wu, p. 123). The fifth *samaya* is the *kanjō* baptism ceremony in a sanctified *dōjō* mentioned above by Amogavajra.

35. T19, n. 930, p. 67c3-8. Reprinted in Abé (2002), p. 42.

and earn a positive rebirth in the next. This theory ran contrary to the “pure esoteric” (*junmitsu*) stance that the exclusive goal of Shingon practice was to achieve Buddhahood in this very body.<sup>36</sup>

Shingon did not exclude Pure Land teachings, but complemented them. This was particularly the case with Pure Land death rites, which were later adopted by Myōe 明恵 (1173-1232) and Eizon 叡尊 (1201-1290), who recommended different esoteric techniques based on the the *Light Mantra of the Great Consecration of the Infallible Lasso Vairocana* (*Fukū kenjaku Birushana butsu daikanjō kōshingon* 不空羅索毘盧遮那佛大灌頂光真言)<sup>37</sup> in order to guarantee rebirth in Amitābha’s Pure Land. These techniques included mantra recitation and seed syllable visualization. In their minds, Pure Land rebirth was in fact the goal of these Shingon death rites. “Achieving Buddhahood in this body,” the goal of the “pure esoteric” tradition, was also not viewed as contradictory with Pure Land rebirth during this time. Jippan’s 実範 *Record of Practices for the Sick and Dying* (*Byōchū shūgyōki* 病中修行記) shows how Three Mysteries practice can be used to achieve union with Amitābha, and thereby experience the non-duality of this world with Amitābha’s Pure Land in order to achieve Buddhahood in this very body.<sup>38</sup>

From a theoretical perspective, Pure Land Buddhism and Shingon were further equated in the writings of the Shingon monk, Kakuban 覚鑁 (1095–1143). Like Shōken, Kakuban emphasized the identity of Amitābha and Mahāvairocana, drawing on the wealth of

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36. Abé (2002), p. 42.

37. T19, n. 1002.

38. Abé (2002), p. 42.

mixed Esoteric sutra literature and Pure Land practice popular on Kōyasan before Kakuban's time. Many of the places Kakuban was active overlapped with Chōgen years later, and while Chōgen's sparse writings do not reference Kakuban directly, their shared network of personal relations and common interest in combining Shingon with Pure Land practice suggests a connection.

Kakuban received his ordination at Ninnaji 仁和寺, which owned estates managed by his father. He studied at Tōdaiji early in his life, but met his most influential teacher on Kōyasan. After receiving his formal dharma transmission, Kakuban managed to secure imperial sponsorship from the Retired Emperor Toba to construct the Daidenpōin 大伝法院, also known as Negoroji 根來寺, which was completed in 1132. Kakuban not only forged a strong relationship with the retired emperor, but his writings circulated among the aristocratic community in Kyoto, receiving attention from literati such as Kanezane.<sup>39</sup>

The connections between Kakuban and Chōgen become visible in 1176 on the Kōyasan bronze bell that memorialized Chōgen as the “*kanjin* [*hijiri*] who visited China three times.” As discussed previously, the bell was dedicated to the monk Shōkei 聖慶 and Minamoto no Tokifusa 源時房. Both were great-grandchildren of Minamoto no Toshifusa 源俊房 (1035-1121) of the Murakami Genji 村上源氏 line. These were the same Murakami Genji who had close ties with Daigoji, Chōgen's ordination temple, and eventually became

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39. Harada, p. 217.

Chōgen's sponsors.<sup>40</sup> In Chōgen's younger days, members of the clan used their influence to help him transfer from Daigoji to Kōyasan, where he would eventually visit the Daidenpōin, Kakuban's temple. The linkage between the Murakami Genji and the Daidenpōin is less clear, but at some point they affiliated themselves with Kakuban's temple, perhaps due to their fondness for Kakuban himself, since Morotoki's elder brother, Moroyori 師頼 (1068-1139), studied under him. In any case, a record mentions Morotoki accompanying Emperor Shirakawa on his visit to the Daidenpōin in 1127, suggesting the Murakami Genji's connections with Kakuban and the temple had been established by that time.<sup>41</sup>

Chōgen's relationship with the Murakami Genji expanded to include many members of the clan after he returned to Japan and undertook the rebuilding of Tōdaiji, as evinced by documents inside of the *agyō* (open-mouthed) Vajra-wielding guardian statue at the Tōdaiji Great South Gate. That list includes the names of the Minister of the Left (*sadaijin* 左大臣) Minamoto no Toshifusa, the Middle Councilor (Chunagon 中納言) Minamoto no Morotoki, Minamoto no Morotada 師任, and Minister of the Right (*udaijin* 右大臣) Morofusa 師房. On the back of the *ungyō* (closed-mouthed) statue of the same pair also appear the names of Morofusa, Toshifusa, Morotoki, and Morotada. Because the names of so many Murakami Genji clan members are recorded on these statues, the clan must have been prominent donors

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40. Later, Chōgen also relied on Minamoto no Moroyuki 源師行, the son of Morotoki, to intervene on behalf of Shōken (Chōgen's associate, the head priest of Daigoji, and author of the aforementioned *Hishō*) in order to realize Shōken's wish to become abbot of the Tōnan'in.

41. Harada, p. 217-218. Although a property dispute that began during Kakuban's lifetime between the Daidenpōin and Kongōbuji 金剛峯寺, another Kōyasan temple, grew even more heated after Kakuban's death, the relationship between the Murakami Genji and Kōyasan continued unabated.

for the sculptures and continued their close relationship with Chōgen during his later years of the Tōdaiji reconstruction.<sup>42</sup>

The Murakami Genji remained a steadfast influence in Chōgen's life, and Chōgen may have learned of Kakuban's writings through this clan and their support of the Daidenpōin. Of course, Chōgen also spent considerable time on Kōyasan himself, and thus he may have become familiar with Kakuban's writings through a visit to the Daidenpōin of his own accord. A third possibility is that Chōgen encountered Kakuban's writings as a young monk at Daigoji. The Ninnaji monk, Kanjo 寛助 (1057-1125),<sup>43</sup> and the Daigoji Rishōin 理性院 monk, Genkaku 賢覚 (1080-1156) were both Kakuban's students. They may have left copies of their master's commentaries in the Daigoji library to be discovered by Chōgen years later.

Whatever the connection between Chōgen and Kakuban, Chōgen's identification of Amitābha and Mahāvairocana closely resembled Kakuban's ideas in several treatises on this subject. In those writings, Kakuban emphasized that Shingon and Pure Land thought are ultimately undifferentiated aspects of the same teaching. In his *Commentary on the Secrets of the Five Cakras and Nine Syllables* (*Gorin kuji myō himitsu shaku* 五輪九字明祕密釋), he writes:

In the esoteric canon, Mahāvairocana (Dainichi 大日) is the one who preaches on [A]mitābha's Paradise, and so it should be understood that all the Pure

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42. Harada, p. 218.

43. Ninnaji and Daigoji were both Shingon temples in Kyoto and shared many abbots.

Lands of the Ten Directions are the transformation land (*kedo* 化土)<sup>44</sup> of a single Buddha. All the Tathāgatas are Mahāvairocana, for whom “Vairocana” and “Amitābha” are different names for the same body. (Likewise, Amitābha’s) Paradise and the *ghana-vyūha* (*J. mitsugon jōdo* 密嚴淨土) Pure Land of Vairocana are different names for the same place.<sup>45</sup>

Kakuban also echoes this view in his *Collection of secret essentials for a lifetime* (*Ichigo taiyō himitsushū* 一期大要秘密集):

The esoteric teachings say that the Ten Paradises are all the territory of one Buddha Land (一仏土), and all the Tathāgatas are the body of one Buddha. This is not different [from saying that] in this Sahā World (i.e. the world of human experience) we can also see paradise, so why must we differentiate between the ten trillion lands?<sup>46</sup>

In the first passage, Kakuban makes the claim that Amitābha is an emanation of Mahāvairocana, and Amitābha’s Pure Land is identical with Mahāvairocana’s Pure Land. In the second passage, he says that there is only one Buddha body and only one world, thus this world of suffering is also the Pure Lands of the Buddhas.

The ideological force of Chōgen’s Amidabutsu naming practice owed to Kakuban’s points in these passages. By adopting the name “Namu-Amidabutsu,” Chōgen clearly stated his identity with Amitābha. However, at the same time, Chōgen implied his identity with Mahāvairocana, since “all the Tathāgatas (i.e. Buddhas, including Amitābha) are Mahāvairocana,” and their different names all refer to the same body. This same logic applied to Chōgen’s disciples who took Amidabutsu names. Following Kakuban’s theories,

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44. “Transformation land” here refers to a realm in which a transformed body of a Buddha resides in order to preach the dharma and save all sentient beings.

45. *Kōgyō daishi zenshū* 興教大師全集, Vol. 2, p. 1122. Reprinted in Harada, p. 219.

46. *Ibid.*



Chōgen was able to use his Amidabutsu names to motivate a spiritual connection between his inner network disciples and the rebuilding of the Great Buddha, the instantiation of Mahāvairocana. Chōgen’s synthetic thought, borrowed from Kakuban and dual Pure Land–Esoteric Buddhist practitioners before him, also explains why he first bestowed Amidabutsu in 1183, during the height of the *kanjin* campaign for the Great Buddha.

Chōgen’s good works can be understood in terms of Kakuban’s passage, as well. Chōgen’s acts of charity toward communities across the country included the founding of *bessho*; the donation of paintings, statues, and sutra scrolls; and the building of bridges, roads, ports, and reservoirs. These activities improved the plights of common people, and also helped Chōgen to spread the Pure Land faith among lay devotees. At the same time, Chōgen’s good works aimed to erase the distinctions between “this Sahā world” and “the one Buddha land,” transforming this realm of ordinary experience into paradise.<sup>47</sup> Thus, Chōgen’s good works were one aspect of a single ideological thread that bound his Amidabutsu naming practice with Pure Land worship and the reconstruction of the Great Buddha.

#### *Identity of disciples in Chōgen’s inner network*

Chōgen’s Amidabutsu autonoms appear in regions where Chōgen was active. Many of the names appear in documents related to Tōdaiji or Chōgen’s estates and *bessho*. However, Amidabutsu names also appear in the Kyūshū 九州 region. Chōgen traveled to Kyūshū in order to embark upon his voyages across the East China Sea from the trade port of

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47. Harada, p. 218-219.

Hakata. He was familiar with the community of Chinese traders and workmen who lived there, including Chen Heqing, who served as a principle technician during the rebuilding of Tōdaiji. One of Chōgen's most important contacts in the region was the monk Shūyū 宗祐, who also befriended Song traders and donated a complete copy of the Song canon to the Great Shrine in Munakata 宗像.<sup>48</sup> The rise and decline in the use of Amidabutsu names in Kyūshū seems to have occurred in the brief period from 1195-1201, and may reflect Shūyū's activities in the region.<sup>49</sup>

Many of the identities of Chōgen's disciples in his inner network have been identified, though a number have not. One problem in ascertaining the identities of individuals with Amidabutsu names is that sometimes multiple people used identical names. Thus, if a person with an Amidabutsu name is not separately identified in a particular document, establishing a common referent for an Amidabutsu name can be problematic. Following is a summary of some of the persons recorded within Chōgen's inner network whose identity or profession has been determined:

Persons mentioned in Chōgen's will. Two of Chōgen's closest disciples were named primary beneficiaries in Chōgen's will (*Yuzurijō* 譲状).<sup>50</sup> The first was Shōken,<sup>51</sup> but he passed away in 1196, and so the will was rewritten naming the primary beneficiary as Jōhan

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48. The *kami* of the Great Shrine there was a protector of maritime traffic between Japan and China.

49. Ishida, p. 102.

50. *Yuzurijō*, in Kobayashi, p. 344-350.

51. Shōken probably had an Amidabutsu name since he had such a close relationship with Chōgen, but that name has not been identified in sources.

定範 (1165-1225), who succeeded Shōken as the abbot of the Tōnan'in 東南院. Chōgen's will records both Jōhan's dharma name and his Amidabutsu name, Gan- 含一. Further details about Jōhan are sparse, but according to the *Tōdaiji bessho shidai*, he studied both Sanron and Shingon, and also rose to become the abbot of Daigoji.<sup>52</sup>

Another close associate of Chōgen named as a beneficiary in the will was Chōgen's cousin, whose family name was Ōe 大江. He eventually adopted the name "Kan-Amidabutsu" 観一. When Kan-Amidabutsu was sixteen, he was ordained at Byōdōin 平等院 and specialized in Shingon studies. In 1181, he accompanied Chōgen as a *kanjin* assistant. Upon Chōgen's orders in 1192, Kan-Amidabutsu succeeded Chōgen as the second generation abbot of Jōdoji, the Pure Land Hall on the *bessho* established in Harima. Based on the coincidence of their surnames, Kan-Amidabutsu may be Ōe Moromori 大江師盛, who was named as manager for the Tōdaiji estate in Iga.<sup>53</sup>

Shun-Amidabutsu's 春一 name appears both in Chōgen's will and as an estate manager (*mokudai* 目代) in a document related to the Suō estate. From 1195, following the opening ceremony for the newly constructed Great Buddha Hall, Chōgen gradually relinquished control over the affairs of the Suō estate, delegating the day-to-day responsibilities to others. Shun-Amidabutsu probably assumed these duties after Chōgen. A Toku-Amidabutsu 得一 and Nyo-Amidabutsu 如一 are also named in Chōgen's will and appear in a document related to Shindaibutsuji 新大仏寺, a temple founded by Chōgen and sponsored by Yoritomo in 1202, though little else is known about them. Each of the above

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52. Ishida, p. 109.

53. Ishida, p. 104.

individuals, the only ones identified by Amidabutsu names in Chōgen's will, inherited Tōdaiji estates. In the will, Chōgen says he had worked with each of them for many years and developed close affinities for them.<sup>54</sup>

Sculptors (busshi 仏師). Kaikei 快慶 (active late 12th and early 13th c.), one of the most prominent Buddhist sculptors of his day, began working for Chōgen after receiving the remit to sculpt a Maitreya statue for the Sanbōin at Daigoji, and later carved the *agyō* Vajra-wielding guardian statue at the Tōdaiji Great South Gate.<sup>55</sup> Kaikei was the first recorded person after Chōgen to use an Amidabutsu name, An-, which he variously wrote with a Sanskrit or Chinese character, 安 —. Kaikei's disciple, *Chōkai* 長快, used the name Jō-Amidabutsu 定 — and is listed in the *Tōdaiji yōroku*. Jō-Amidabutsu's name also appears on an engraving inside the statue of Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk at Tōdaiji and on eight lines of documents inserted into the Amitābha statue at Kengōin 遺迎院.<sup>56</sup>

Architecture related. Several Amidabutsu names appear in the *Hōkkedō munefuda* 法華堂棟札, which lists the names of carpenters, construction workers, and dates for the restoration of the Hokkedō 法華堂,<sup>57</sup> a hall at Tōdaiji originally constructed in 734 that

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54. *Ibid.*, p. 104-105.

55. Apart from serving as a Buddhist sculptor, Kaikei was also an ordained monk, earning the rank of Hokkyō shōnin 法橋上人 in 1203.

56. Ishida, p. 109. More details on Kengōin will follow, but the Amitābha statue in which this list was found was originally placed in Kanezane's villa in Kyōto, and later moved to Kengōin by Kanezane's grandson, Kujō Michiie 九条道家 (1193-1252), who founded the temple. Kengōin is now the headquarters for the Kengōin Jōdo Shinshū sect.

57. Also known as the "Sangatsudō" 三月堂 and used for ceremonies involving the Lotus Sutra.

survived the Taira destruction of the main temple. Chōgen organized repairs to the hall during his rebuilding of the remainder of Tōdaiji. According to this document, Chōgen ordered Shin-Amidabutsu 新 — to help coordinate the project. Two other directors for the renovations are also listed: En-Amidabutsu 縁 — and Gaku-Amidabutsu 学 —. The *Tōdaiji bessho shidai* 東大寺別所次第 identifies the Chief Monk Supervisor (Daisōzu 大僧都) Bengyō 弁曉 as Shin-Amidabutsu. The *Hōkkedō munefuda* notes that three years after the renovation of the *Hōkkedō* was completed in 1199, Bengyō assumed the role of Tōdaiji abbot (*bettō* 別当), so the two names probably refer to the same person. As for other architecture-related disciples, there was a Rei-Amidabutsu 礼 — and Sen-Amidabutsu 専 — who assisted with repairs to the Nigatsudō 二月堂 at Tōdaiji, also under Chōgen's direction. Rei-Amidabutsu donated two fields in 1198 to finance the construction of a Tōdaiji bathhouse.<sup>58</sup>

Suō bessho related. Some Amidabutsu names were recorded in relation to a particular *bessho*. For example, the *Tōdaiji monjo* 東大寺文書 records the names of twelve persons, including six rectors (*ina* 維那),<sup>59</sup> and three custodians (*jōji* 承仕),<sup>60</sup> who were members of the *nembutsu* society at the Suō bessho. All of the members of the society listed by this source have Amidabutsu names with the exception of the custodians, who were lower-ranking monks. Chi-Amidabutsu 智 — is the first name recorded. This name also appears in an inscription on the back of the portrait statue of Chōgen at the Harima *bessho* (Jōdoji), and

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58. Ishida, p. 108, and *Nigatsudō goki* 二月堂古記.

59. Rectors were temple controllers in charge of distributing and arranging duties. The rector is the second position in the administrative hierarchy of a temple.

60. Custodians managed day-to-day tasks at temples such as providing ritual implements and incense, etc. They also supported the scholarly monks.

so Chi-Amidabutsu probably assisted with Chōgen's *kanjin* efforts. Ken-Amidabutsu 賢一 is the second name recorded on the list of Suō *nembutsu* society members. His name also appears in a copy of the *Avatamsaka sūtra* (*Kegonkyō* 華嚴經) at the Tōdaiji library. On the scrolls of that sutra copy, beside a red seal for the Great Buddha Hall, is a postscript that reads “issued by Ken-Amidabutsu in the year 1200” (正治二年交了賢アミダ仏). The postscript probably shows that Ken-Amidabutsu was a high-ranking monk at Tōdaiji at this time. Other names listed as members of the Suō *nembutsu* society include Jō- 定一, Shun- 春一,<sup>61</sup> Jō- 成一, Kon- 金一, Ken- 見一, Jitsu- 実一, and Kyō- 教一. The rectors are separately identified as Ren- 蓮一, Ō- 王一, Zen- 善一, Shō- 聖一, and Kei- 恵一.<sup>62</sup>

Miscellaneous. Several other Amidabutsu names identifying monks with uncertain relations with Chōgen appear in historical records. Inside the Tōdaiji seated statue of Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk is an inscription that reads “Ku-Amidabutsu, Myōhen” 空阿弥陀仏明遍, identifying the monk Myōhen 明遍 (1142-1224) with his Amidabutsu name, Kū- 空一.<sup>63</sup> Myōhen studied Sanron 三論 under two teachers, Binkaku 敏覚 and Myōkai 明海 at the Tōnan'in 東南院. This institution was closely connected to Tōdaiji since the head monk in charge of Sanron studies at Tōdaiji usually served as the abbot of the Tōnan-in. Chōgen presumably knew Myōhen through this connection. Elsewhere, the Amidabutsu

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61. This is probably the same Shun-Amidabutsu who inherited the Suo estate from Chōgen.

62. Ishida, p. 106-107.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

names of Ki- 帰一, Shin- 真一, and Ken- 見一 appear in papers inserted into a Śākyamuni image at Bujōji 峯定寺.<sup>64</sup>

Names for parents. An interesting aside concerning Amidabutsu names is the example of the monk Ryōyū 良祐, who bestowed Amidabutsu names on each of his parents. Ryōyū began copying the complete Buddhist canon in 1187 and completed this laborious undertaking in 1227, creating a “complete canon by a single brush” (*ippitsu issaikyō* 一筆一切經),<sup>65</sup> now deposited at Kōshōji 興聖寺 in Fukuoka Prefecture. Generally, Ryōyū signed the works with his dharma name (一筆書寫行人 僧良祐). However, in 1195, while copying the thirtieth fascicle of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* (*Dai chido ron* 大智度論), he used the signature “*bhikṣu* Sō-Amidabutsu” (比丘僧阿彌陀佛) instead, the only instance found of this particular Amidabutsu name. In the next line of the same document, Ryōyū wrote the following dedication: “[For my] loving father, the abbot Kenyū 兼祐, and my compassionate mother, fourth child of the Fujiwara, [that this] wonderful Law will guide them to Buddhahood” (慈父座主兼祐悲母藤原四子尼妙法為成佛). In the following year, 1196, as Ryōyū copied the eightieth fascicle of the same *sāstra*, in a similar dedication he identified his father and mother, this time with Amidabutsu names: “For my loving father, the abbot Kenyū-Amidabutsu, and my compassionate mother, fourth child of the Fujiwara, Ren-Amidabutsu” (慈父座主兼祐阿彌陀佛悲母藤原四子蓮阿彌陀佛). In later dedications, Ryōyū inserted the prefix “*kyō*” 經 before his father’s Amidabutsu name (兼祐經阿彌陀佛).

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64. *Ibid.*, p. 111. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 1, p. 225-236.

65. Ryōshū’s work is mentioned in Mochizuki’s entry for “sutra copying” (*shakyō* 寫經), p. 2138b. Fujiwara Sadanobu 藤原定信 (1088-1156?) was famous for a similar endeavor.

There are no known connections between Ryōyū and Chōgen. Since Ryōyū seems to have bestowed Amidabutsu names of his own choosing,<sup>66</sup> this episode may point to changing circumstances at the end of the 12th century, during which monks began to use Amidabutsu names for their own purposes, unrelated to Chōgen's inner network. Interestingly, by 1199, Ryōyū stops using Amidabutsu names for himself and his father, though he continues the practice for his mother, at one point even referring to her Amidabutsu name "Ren-" as her "ordination name" (*hōgō* 法號).<sup>67</sup>

After Chōgen's death and the gradual disintegration of his inner network, the use of Amida-Butsu names by his disciples appears to have declined. Kaikei discontinued the use of his Amidabutsu name in inscriptions after 1206.<sup>68</sup> In 1210, concerning a statue for the Shōren'in in Shijōkōdō 青蓮院熾盛光堂<sup>69</sup> created by Kaikei, he is mentioned in the *Monyōki* 門葉記 (Northern and Southern Courts period, Nanbokuchō 南北朝, 1336-1392) by his ecclesiastical rank and ordination name, "the Buddhist sculptor, Eye of the dharma Kaikei" (仏師法眼快慶). "Eye of the dharma" (*hōgen* 法眼) was the second rank within the Office of Monastic Affairs (*sōgō* 僧綱), to which Kaikei seems to have been appointed around this

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66. While it is not impossible that his father obtained an Amidabutsu name from an association with Chōgen, it seems highly unlikely that his mother would have, as well.

67. Ishida, p. 101-102.

68. Aoki (2002), p. 233. Kaikei continued his sculpture career after Chōgen's death, primarily creating works for Hieizan, Kōyasan, and Daigoji monks he met during his work on the Kengōin Amitābha statue. Tendai monks whose names appear in documents recovered from that statue include Jien 慈円 (1155-1225), Kenshin 顯真 (1130-92), Shinshō 真性 (1167-1230), and Insai 印西. Kaikei worked with Jien in particular on later projects.

69. Aoki (2002), p. 233. The Shōren'in is a Tendai temple in Kyōto. The central object of worship is Tejaprabhā (*J. Shijōkō nyorai* 熾盛光如来).



time. Another inscription by Kaikei on the joining board for the foot (*ashihozo* 足ほぞ) of a statue of Amitābha at Tōjuin 東寿院 in 1211 reads “Head carpenter and eye of the dharma, Kaikei” (巧匠／法眼快慶), also omitting Kaikei’s Amidabutsu name.<sup>70</sup> Later, in 1218, Kaikei also repaired the famous Śākyamuni statue brought from China by Chōnen (?-1016) installed at Seiryōji in Kyōto after the statue was damaged by fire. On the lotus base of the statue, Kaikei’s ink inscription similarly reads, “The great Buddhist sculptor and eye of the dharma, Kaikei” (大仏師法眼快慶).<sup>71</sup>

Kaikei’s disuse of his Amidabutsu name roughly correlates in time with his promotion in ecclesiastical rank, so one possibility is simply that Kaikei favored his rank over his Amidabutsu name. However, Kaikei’s decision to return to the use of his ordination name in his signatures may also illustrate the sway Chōgen and his Pure Land ideology had over the members of Chōgen’s inner network during Chōgen’s lifetime. While Chōgen was alive, he assume the role of the “primary” emanation of Amitābha within his Pure Land network, underscored by his adoption of the name “Homage to Amitābha” (Namu-Amidabutsu). The use of Amidabutsu names by the other members of the network also implied their identities with Amitābha, but indirectly, mediated by Chōgen’s presence. Thus, Chōgen’s death may have effectively broken the connection the members of the network felt for one another. If so, this is a testament to the power of Chōgen’s Pure Land ideology that underpinned his network.

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70. Inscription reprinted in Aoki (2002), p. 235.

71. Inscription reprinted in Aoki (2002), p. 240.

While Chōgen's network gradually dissolved, his Amidabutsu naming practice did not end. In the early 13th century, Amidabutsu names found a new home in the emerging Pure Land sectarian groups that traced their lineages to Hōnen and Shinran. Amidabutsu names proliferated through the land-holding warrior class and *jitō* estate stewards in the latter Kamakura Period. Mizukami Kazuhisa<sup>72</sup> has conducted research on documents relating to individuals who adopted Amidabutsu names during this time, showing that they became a much larger and more diffuse group with few relations to Chōgen. Amidabutsu names also assumed a different significance within these groups, since their members were not bound by Chōgen's ideological commitments.

### **Chōgen's Outer Network of donors, managers, and laborers**

Chōgen's network of relationships with devotees was much larger than his inner network. His relationships also included donors, assistant managers, and laborers, all of whom facilitated the reconstruction of Tōdaiji. In contrast to his inner network of close disciples, who were all monks, this "outer network" amounted to a looser affiliation of individuals from diverse socio-economic and professional backgrounds. They sponsored statues installed at Tōdaiji, the *bessho*, and other temples with *nembutsu* societies. They also participated in Chōgen's Pure Land rituals organized at these institutions. The resulting network included people from far-flung regions of the country, probably numbering in the thousands or more.

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72. See *Chūsei no shōen to shakai*, Ch. 11.

As with the inner network, records of Chōgen's outer network are incomplete, since there are no remaining rosters of the participants in the *nembutsu* societies at Chōgen's *bessho*, for example. In general, the names of common people who participated in such societies were rarely, if ever, recorded. However, there are many reasons to think that Chōgen's outer network was socially diverse in character. First, many of Chōgen's good works projects were organized in order to benefit the lives of common people in regions near Chōgen's *bessho*. These projects, some discussed previously, included the building and repair of roads and bridges to ease the journeys of travelers and protect them from thieves and wild animals,<sup>73</sup> the repair of harbors to ensure the safety of sailors and fisherman, and the renovation of the Sayama reservoir to provide water for crop irrigation. It seems natural that many of the ordinary people who benefitted from these good works and lived proximal to Chōgen's *bessho* would have attended the Pure Land ceremonies organized there. Second, the spatial dimensions of each *bessho* was relatively large, with fewer pillars separating the bays than was routine during the period, thereby affording more space within the structure for large congregations. Third, Chōgen constructed "regular" bathhouses at his *bessho* and temples in Hakata for use by common people in contrast to some bathhouses he built exclusively for *hijiri* in short-term residence.<sup>74</sup> Fourth, documents inserted into the Amitābha statue installed in the Harima *bessho* contain many names preceded by "Ōbe," indicating that the list consists of local monks and laymen who contributed to the building of the hall and management of the Ōbe estate. In that case, the individuals were probably prominent

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73. Rosenfield, p. 228-229.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

provincials, but nevertheless several classes removed from the aristocrats of the capital.<sup>75</sup> Finally, Chōgen claimed in the Sazenshū to have bestowed his Amidabutsu names on rich and poor, high and low. While all the individuals who used Amidabutsu names and who have been identified were monks, he may have meant that Amidabutsu names were bestowed on monks both of aristocratic and common upbringing. Whatever his exact meaning, the phrase suggests Chōgen attended to people of all social classes, and supports the idea that his congregations at the *bessho* were also diverse in composition.

The most tangible extant evidence regarding the extent of Chōgen's outer network are lists of names recorded in statues donated to the *bessho* or other temples. The practice of inserting such lists belongs to a category of ancient practices from India involving the insertion of documents, sutras, *dhāraṇī*, relics, and other items inside statues at the time of their consecration. The Chinese monk and pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664) witnessed these activities during his peregrination across India, reporting of scriptures inserted in small stupas known as “*dharma śarīra*” (*lit.* “relics of the Buddha's teaching”) This practice continued unabated for centuries in India, as shown in texts from the late 11th or early 12th centuries that describe processes for inserting relics into hollow spaces in the backs of divinities' images.<sup>76</sup>

The practice of inserting documents and other items into statues became commonplace in East Asia, though there are fewer extant examples in China due to the vagaries of history. In Japan, the practice evolved into an activity known as “*kechien kōmyō*”

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75. The statue has not been disassembled, however, and the lists have only been inspected by probes inserted into the statue.

76. Robson, p. 327-328.

結縁交名, in which patrons who participated in the creation of a divinity's statue included their names on a list, sometimes at the end of a *sutra* or *dhāraṇī* text, that was inserted inside the statue. Such lists provided a spiritual link between donors and the divinity, accruing merit for the participants. Because they were inserted into the interior cavity of the statues, the presumed locations of the divinities' minds, the lists guaranteed that the sponsors of the statues would receive the perpetual consideration of the deities. Creating lists of donors for statues was part of a larger category of activities in East Asia known as “*kechien*” 結縁 (*C. jieyuan*) that included many merit-making activities such as copying sutras, memorializing the dead, or simply studying about Buddhism.<sup>77</sup> From the *insei* period in Japan (1086-1192), retired emperors subsidized the copying of sutras, often created with precious metals, dyes, and inks, as exemplified by Emperor Toba's sponsorship of the *Kunōjikyō* 久能寺經, or the Taira clan's sponsorship of the *Heike nōkyō* 平家納經, both reproductions of the *Lotus Sutra*. In each of these cases, *kechien* groups were formed by the principle sponsors in order to supplement the costs of the elaborate reproductions.<sup>78</sup> By the Kamakura Period, this sort of activity was widespread in Japan, even extending to groups of *kechien* activists (*kechiensha* 結縁者) from meager socio-economic backgrounds who pooled their resources to finance small statues.<sup>79</sup> The practice was especially rampant among Pure Land sectarian followers from the 13th century. One of the largest lists of members recorded for a *kechien* group was

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77. *JAANUS*, “*kechien*.” These activities were treated as merit-making because they furthered the bodhisattva vow at the root of Mahāyāna practice: to spread the dharma and save all sentient beings.

78. Aoki (1999), p. 212.

79. *JAANUS*, “*kechien*.”

associated with the carving of the Shiga Gyokkeiji 玉桂寺 Amitābha statue, which contained approximately 45,000 names.<sup>80</sup>

*Kechien lists related to Chōgen*

Chōgen organized his own *kechien* groups in order to fund many of the statues he created for Tōdaiji, the *bessho*, and other institutions. As discussed in Chapter 3, the majority of these statues served as the central objects of worship for Pure Land devotional groups. A number also contained hollow cavities in which *kechien* lists were inserted upon consecration of the statues in order to identify the patrons who participated in their production. Almost all of the *kechien* lists organized by Chōgen were inserted inside statues of Amitābha, linking Chōgen's devotees and Amitābha's Pure Land, to which they aspired. Recognition through one of Chōgen's *kechien* lists was an acknowledgement and reward for their contributions.<sup>81</sup>

Most of the *kechien* lists have been lost with their statues or still remain inside, unstudied. However, a well-preserved *kechien* list associated with Chōgen was created for an Amitābha statue sculpted by Kaikei and installed at Kengōin 遣仰院 in Kyōto. The list contains a number of aristocrats and warriors who belonged to Chōgen's outer network as

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80. Aoki, p. 175-177.

81. As discussed in the previous chapter, Chōgen's *kechien* lists also played a role in forming a lasting peace between the belligerents of the Gempei War. Just as Go-Shirakawa and Kanazane organized numerous rites involving 84,000 pagodas following the templates established by King Aśoka and Emperor Wu of the Liang in order to pray for the repose of the dead, Chōgen relied on *kechien* activities to fund Amitābha statues for his *bessho* used in Pure Land rites for the repose of dead souls. This was particularly the case at the Tōdaiji *bessho*.

sponsors of the Tōdaiji reconstruction, making it particularly worthy of mention.<sup>82</sup> Kengōin was founded in 1199 with the patronage of Kujō Michiie 九条道家 (1149-1207), Kanezane's grandson,<sup>83</sup> and by the monk Shōku 證空 (1177-1247) of Hōnen's lineage. The temple was a place of study for Tendai, Shingon, *Vinaya*, and Pure Land, though today it serves as a Jōdo shinshū 浄土真宗 institution. The Amitābha statue at Kengōin served as the main object of veneration along with a statue of Śākyamuni, the two acting as a pair to welcome believers to Amitābha's Pure Land.<sup>84</sup> The statue can be dated to sometime after 1194 based on the documents inside, which include: (1) a *kechien* list (*kechien kōmyō*) of about 12,000 names written on the back of paper printed with small Buddhas (Figure 22), (2) a dedicatory prayer

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82. Another *kechien* list that would probably prove useful to the study of Chōgen's outer network remains in the Amitābha statue installed at the Harima bessho (now called "Jōdoji" 浄土寺), however the statue has not been disassembled. Probes were inserted into the statue in 1997 confirming the existence of seven scrolls inside, but the findings were minimal. The date 1195 was identified on the list (Rosenfield, p. 156). Other examples of extant *kechien* lists in Chōgen's statuary include one from the Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk at Tōdaiji, the Śākyamuni statue from Bujōji 峰定寺 in Kyōto, and (probably) a yet to be disassembled Jizō 地藏 statue at Tōdaiji.

83. For Kanezane, the *kechien* activities surrounding the creation of the Kengōin Amitābha statue had a personal motivation because his eldest son, Kujō Yoshimichi 良通 (1167-1188) had recently passed away at the tender age of twenty-two, leading Kanezane to lament his first-born in his diary: "[his] motives were extremely filial. An action for every word, [he] never opposed his parents' wishes" (志在至孝，一事一言，不逆父母之命) (*Gyokuyō*, Vol. 2, p. 500). Thus, for Kanezane and the Kujō clan, support for the project functioned as a memorial for their unfortunate descendent (Aoki, 1999, p. 181).

84. In the name of the temple, "*ken*" 遣 refers to Śākyamuni "sending" the Pure Land devotee to the West upon his death, and "*kō*" 仰 refers to Amitābha "welcoming" the devotee upon his arrival (Rosenfield, p. 151).



Figure 22. *Page from Kengōin kechien list. One sheet from set. Kamakura Period (ca. 1194). Kengōin 遣仰院, Kyōto. Reprinted from Aoki (1999), p. 85.*



(*ganmon* 願文)<sup>85</sup> composed by Chōgen with a text for the transfer of merit (*kaikōmon* 廻向文)<sup>86</sup> and Diamond World and Womb World *dhāraṇī*, (3) a letter with contemporary news,<sup>87</sup> also written on the back of paper printed with small Buddhas, (4) a piece of paper inscribed with Sanskrit characters, and (5) a coil of human hair.<sup>88</sup>

The names included on the *kechien* list were written on pages with printed Buddhas, a practice also found on *kechien* lists in other statues during this period, some related to Tōdaiji: for example, the Vajra-wielding Guardian Statues at the Tōdaiji South gate, the Tōdaiji statue of Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk, a statue of Fudōmyō 不動明<sup>89</sup> at the Daigoji Sambōin in Kyōto, a statue of Amitābha at the Tōjuin 東寿院<sup>90</sup> in Okayama, and a statue of Shōtoku taishi at Hōryūji 法隆寺 in Nara. The practice of using printed Buddhas

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85. Other examples of *ganmon* in statues carved by Kaikei are found in (1) a standing statue of Maitreya (see Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed., 2003, Vol. 1, p. 45-49) owned by the Boston MFA, written by Kaikei himself; and (2) an Ananda statue (see Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed., 2003, Vol. 3, p. 91-113) from Kyoto's Hōonji 報恩寺, written by the monk Sonnen 尊念 (Aoki, 1999, p. 177).

86. Based on the bodhisattva vow to transfer all one's merit in order to help sentient beings attain enlightenment. Many sutras and other Buddhist texts traditionally contained this sort of statement, for example in the "Chapter of the Parable of the Conjured City" in the *Lotus Sutra* and at the end of the exposition regarding Amitābha in the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā* (十住毘婆沙論) attributed to Nāgārjuna (*FXDCD*).

87. The letter included in the Kengōin statue is tangentially related to the *kanjin* campaign, but does not seem relevant to the *kechien* documents. Kaikei is known to have included such letters in other statues he created, as well, for example a statue at Hachiyōrengeji 八葉蓮華寺, a seated statue of Jizō 地蔵 at Nyoiji 如意寺, and statues of the Four Guardian Kings 四天王 at Kongōbuji 金剛峯寺.

88. Aoki (1999), p. 176-177.

89. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed., Vol. 2, p. 8-12.

90. See *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 204-228.

for Buddhist rites was promoted earlier in the Heian Period by the Tendai monk Kakuchō 覚超 (960-1034) in his *Shuzen kōshiki* 修善講式, although he discussed their use in the context of memorial services for the dead or dying. By Chōgen's time, the use of printed Buddhas more often than not related to *kanjin* campaigns for the construction of temples.<sup>91</sup>

The *ganmon* written by Chōgen included in the Kengōin Amitābha statue vows on behalf of all those who participated in the creation of the statue to pursue the Buddhist path and attain enlightenment in Amitābha's Pure Land. The vows made in the *ganmon* were understood to apply to each person whose name was included on the *kechien* list. According to the prayer:

We wish that in the future kalpas as numerous as the grains of sands of the Ganges, that we contemplate the teacher of gods and men (i.e. the Buddha) in every moment without exception; that we diligently strive towards the Buddha's enlightened comprehension (*shūchi* 種智) like the shadow follows the body,<sup>92</sup> without digressing for even one day or night.

We wish that in birth after birth, we come to perceive all Buddhas, and in age after age we continue to hear the wondrous sutras; that we practice without regression the conduct of the bodhisattvas and quickly achieve unsurpassed great enlightenment.

All sentient beings without bound vow to journey across,<sup>93</sup> afflictions without bound we vow to sever; the dharma gates<sup>94</sup> without bound we vow to understand, unsurpassed great enlightenment we vow to realize.

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91. Aoki (1999) p. 178.

92. An idiom indicating proximity or a close relationship.

93. i.e. to the other shore, a metaphor for liberation. In the Mahāyāna context, this is another way of referring to the bodhisattva's vow to save all beings, that task being tantamount to one's own liberation.

94. i.e. the Buddhist teachings and doctrines.

We wish that when we look upon life's end, we have completely removed all obstacles;<sup>95</sup> that we will face the Buddha Amitābha and attain rebirth in his paradise.

After we are reborn in that other country,<sup>96</sup> we shall manifest the achievement of his great vow;<sup>97</sup> complete perfection without remainder will benefit all in the realms of sentient beings.

[in Sanskrit] (Dhāraṇī of the Five Buddhas of the Diamond World  
(金剛界五仏真言))

[in Sanskrit] (Dhāraṇī of the Five Buddhas of the Womb World  
(胎藏界五仏真言))

唵縛日羅散底鑠 (Dhāraṇī of the Diamond World Mahāvairocana  
(金剛界大日真言))

阿鑠藍哈欠 (Dhāraṇī of the Five Characters of Heavenly Divinities  
(五字有天真言))

阿尾羅咩欠 (Dhāraṇī of the Womb World Mahāvairocana  
(胎藏界大日真言))

阿羅波遮那 (Five Character Dhāraṇī of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva  
(文殊菩薩五字真言))

We hope that this merit will permeate everywhere, and that we, along with all sentient beings, will together realize the Buddhist Path.

Namu-Amidabutsu (Chōgen) [in Sanskrit]<sup>98</sup>

The inclusion of the esoteric *dhāraṇī* at the end of the document, including separate *dhāraṇī* for the Five Buddhas and Mahāvairocana of the Womb World and Diamond World, recalls the *zushi* (5) mentioned in the *Sazenshū*,<sup>99</sup> in which one or both of the *Mandalas of the Two Worlds* were attached inside the doors that enclosed an Amitābha triptych. In both cases, the

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95. i.e. to our enlightenment.

96. i.e. Amitābha's Pure Land

97. In the *Larger Pure Land Sutra*, Amitābha vows never to attain his final enlightenment until he has delivered all sentient beings to his Pure Land.

98. Photograph of *ganmon* in Aoki (1999), p. 14; transcription on p. 177.

99. See p. 194.

implication is that Amitābha is an emanation of Mahāvairocana, and thus those who use the *zushi* as an object of devotion are connected to Mahāvairocana through their Amitābha worship.

The hair, wrapped in a piece of Japanese paper (*washi* 和紙) and inserted into the head of the Kengōin Amitābha statue is something of a mystery, though there are other examples of this practice in the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (Senshu kannon 千手観音) state at Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 in Kyōto, and the seated statue of Mahāvairocana at Shuzenji 修善寺 in Shizuoka, where the hair was confirmed to be female.<sup>100</sup> In these cases, hair seems to have functioned as another way of creating a link between an individual and a deity, much in the same way *kechien* lists worked. Perhaps inserting personal effects was considered to create an even stronger bond than the mere incorporation of one's name.<sup>101</sup>

*Kanjin for Tōdaiji viewed from kechien lists*

Many of the individuals who appear in the Kengōin *kechien* list participated in the *kanjin* campaign for the restoration of Tōdaiji, and thus provide further documentation of the extent of Chōgen's outer network, particularly donors. The creation of the *kechien* list and consecration of the Kengōin Amitābha statue in which it was inserted (*ca.* 1194) coincided with the period Chōgen acquired Tōdaiji estates, constructed the *bessho*, and rebuilt the main structures of the temple, including the Great Buddha Hall. In 1192, Chōgen assumed control over the Suō Estate, and later that year built the Harima *bessho*. Shortly after, in 1193, the

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100. Aoki (1999), p. 179.

101. *Ibid.*

timbers used as the main pillars for Tōdaiji were transported to Nara using Chōgen's newly developed transportation infrastructure. 1194, the Kamakura shogunate issued one of several instructions for vassals in provinces across Japan to donate to the *kanjin* campaign. Finally, in 1195, the commemoration ceremony for the Tōdaiji Great Buddha Hall was held. In attendance were representatives of the highest authorities in the land, including Retired Emperor Go-Toba; his mother, Fujiwara no Shokushi; and the Shogun Yoritomo. Preeminent clerics also oversaw the ceremonial proceedings, including the Tōdaiji assistant abbot (*kenbettō* 権別当) Kakuken 覚憲 (1131-1212), who served as lecturer (*kōshi* 講師) for the ceremony, and the Kōfukuji abbot Shin'en 信円 (1153-1224), who served as master of ceremonies (*dōshi* 導師).<sup>102</sup> Each of these persons are also documented in the Kengōin *kechien* list. The list also contains the names of many Tendai monks from the Fujiwara family, many of whom were associated with Hieizan temples. Some of Chōgen's closest disciples who were part of his Amidabutsu inner network such as Ban-Amidabutsu are mentioned, as well.<sup>103</sup>

Data from the Kengōin *kechien* list is supplemented by another list inscribed in lacquer on the inside of the statue of Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk<sup>104</sup> carved by Kaikei in 1201. The statue was created for the Hachiman Shrine at Tōdaiji that burned with the rest of the temple in 1180, and was based on a painting of the deity once stored at Jingoji 神護寺 in

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102. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 906; *Tōdaiji zoku yōroku*, p. 77-102.

103. Aoki (1999), p. 188. However, Aoki confuses the officiants at the eye-opening ceremony for the *Great Buddha* in 1185 and the officiants at the opening ceremony for the Great Buddha Hall in 1195 in this section.

104. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, ed. (2003), Vol. 1, p. 248-255.

Kyōto. The *kechien* list from the Hachiman statue shows Chōgen's deep connections with the imperial family, recording the names of many members of that lineage: Emperor Go-Shirakawa, Emperor Tsuchimikado 土御門 (1196-1231); Emperor Go-Toba 後鳥羽 and his mother, Fujiwara no Shokuji 藤原殖子 (1157-1228); Princess Akiko 暲子内親王 (1137-1211); and Prince Shukaku 守覚法親王 (1150-1202). Many other monks representing a diversity of temples and schools are also represented on the list, including the Tōdaiji administrator, Bengyō 弁暲; the Tōdaiji monk, Binkaku 敏覚; the Shitennōji 四天王寺 head administrator, Chōgen 長嚴 (1152-1228);<sup>105</sup> the Zenrinji 禅林寺 monk, Jōhen 靜遍 (1166-1224); and Kōyasan monks Myōhen 明遍, Myōe 明恵 (1173-1232), and Chōken 澄憲 (1126-1203).<sup>106</sup> The inclusion of these ecclesiastics shows that Chōgen embraced the other centers of religious authority in the country, even though he had few recorded relations with them during his early life as a novice monk or his later years on Kōyasan. Expanding his network to become as inclusive as possible reduced potential interference from other Buddhist institutions, since everyone benefited from the merits of Chōgen religious endeavors when spread equally across social and institutional divides.

A third *kechien* list associated with Chōgen was created in 1189 as part of a set of copies of the *Shorter Pure Land Sutra* (or *Amitābha Sutra*, *J. Amidakyō* 阿弥陀經) and the

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105. Obviously a different Chōgen from the main subject of this thesis.

106. Aoki (2002), p. 232.

*Heart Sutra* (*Hannya shingyō* 般若心經)<sup>107</sup> stored at Isshinji 一心寺 in Ōsaka. In order to produce these works, a different individual hand copied one line each of the texts and recorded his name at the end of that line, a practice known as “one line, one brush” (*ichigyō ippitsu* 一行一筆). Thus, the sutras are themselves both the objects of the *kechien* activity and the records of the devotees who participated in its creation. The two sutra copies served as a pair, with the *Shorter Pure Land Sutra* following directly after the *Heart Sutra* on the same scroll. Notably, at the bottom of three lines in the sutra set is written: “above: Kōyasan” (已上高野), “above: Tōdaiji,” (已上東大寺), and “above: Kōmyōsan (已上光明山).”<sup>108</sup> These notes function as headings that divide the text into three sections, each representative of a hierarchical structure of disciples under three masters associated with these temples. The masters names appear at the beginning of each of the three sections. Those masters, along with their temple affiliation and the number of disciples listed after their names, are: (1) Ban-Amidabutsu, Kōyasan, 29; (2) Namu-Amidabutsu (i.e. Chōgen), Tōdaiji, 14; and (3) Myōhen 明遍, Kōmyōsan, 48. Kōysasan and Tōdaiji were connected through Chōgen and the Kōyasan shinbessho. Myōhen, the representative master from Kōmyōsan in the list, was also closely related to Chōgen as a member of the latter’s Amidabutsu name group, for which he

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107. The *Heart Sutra* describes Avalokiteśvara’s experience of enlightenment after sustained meditation practice. Since Avalokiteśvara is one of Amitābha’s two flanking attendants, the text would have a tangible relation to Pure Land in the eyes of Pure Land practitioners, though it is not normally categorized as a Pure Land text.

108. Kōmyōsan was a Tōdaiji subtemple.

used the autonym “Ku-Amidabutsu” 空-.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, both Ban-Amidabutsu and Myōhen were members of Chōgen’s inner network. Each was also the leader of a Pure Land devotional group at their respective temples. In addition, the monks Jien from Hieizan and Kanshō 観性 from Yoshiminedera 善峰寺<sup>110</sup> also appear in this document as masters followed by a list of forty-five disciples, though their respective temples are not recorded using the “headings” reserved for Kōyasan, Tōdaiji, and Kōmyōsan. Yoshiminedera was also renowned for the practice of Pure Land Buddhism, albeit within the Tendai framework. Thus, all the names in the two sutras appear to be organized not just by masters and disciples, but by Pure Land practice groups.<sup>111</sup> Considering Ban-Amidabutsu and Myōhen were disciples of Chōgen, the document shows the range of Chōgen’s network across Tōdaiji, Kōyasan, and their affiliates, as well as Chōgen’s relationships with Tendai Pure Land practitioners at Hieizan and Yoshiminedera.<sup>112</sup>

Many of the names included in the Isshinji sutra set are also reproduced in the Kengōin documents several years later, including the names of Chōgen, Myōhen, Myōe, Ekaku 恵覚, and Jien. Many of the same names also appear in the *kechien* list inscribed inside the statue of Hachiman in the Guise of a Monk at Tōdaiji, as well as later statues such

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109. Myōhen began his monastic career at Tōdaiji studying Sanron under Binkaku. He left to study Sanron, Shingon, and Pure Land Buddhism at Kōmyōsan, and eventually joined a group of *hijiri* at the Kōyasan Rengedani 蓮華谷 *bessho* (Nishimura, p. 129). It is unclear why Myōhen does not use his Amidabutsu name here like Ban-Amidabutsu.

110. A Tendai *bessho* of Hieizan.

111. The document is also organized so that home temples (Kōyasan, Tōdaiji, and Hieizan), are followed by their subtemples or *bessho* (Kōmyōsan and Yoshiminedera).

112. Aoki (1999), p. 212.



as an Amitābha statue<sup>113</sup> (1203) at Hachiyōrengeji 八葉蓮華寺, a Mañjuśrī statue<sup>114</sup> (1203) at Abe Monjuin 安倍文殊院, and an Amitābha statue<sup>115</sup> (1211) at Tōjuin 東寿院.<sup>116</sup> The fact that many of the persons who composed Chōgen's outer network during the reconstruction of Tōdaiji continued to work together for the dedication of other *kechien* projects through the first decade of the 1200's and after Chōgen's death indicates the stability of some of the social connections in the network over time.

In addition to the primary aim of forming connections between Chōgen's donors and Amitābha, Chōgen's *kechien* activities also reinforced his ideological thrust that connected Amitābha and Mahāvairocana. This connection was further supplemented by Chōgen's relic distribution, which physically brought the body of the Buddha into contact with the outer network of devotees who worshipped at the Tōdaiji satellite *bessho* across Japan.

### **Chōgen's relic worship as a networking activity**

In addition to the ways Chōgen combined Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism already explored, Chōgen also used reliquaries of an Esoteric design known as “*gorintō* 五輪塔,” or “five-element towers,” as a means to develop connections in his inner and outer networks. “*Gorintō*,” refers to the five divisions, or “wheels,” that compose the tower's structure, each representative of one of the five elements (*godai* 五大) thought to form all matter in ancient

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113. See Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan (2003), Vol. 2, p. 91-102.

114. See *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 52-61.

115. See *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 204-223.

116. Aoki (1999), p. 212.

Indian thought. The five elements were earth, water, fire, wind, and space (*kū* 空), each of which constituted a wheel by which the cosmological structure of the world was layered (the lowest being space and the highest, earth). The *gorintō* tower symbolizes these wheels of elements starting with earth as the square base, followed by water as a round sphere, fire as a triangular pyramid, wind as a half-sphere, and space as a “jewel-shaped” sphere on top.<sup>117</sup> Kūkai expanded upon five elements theory by relating each element to an aspect of emptiness: original non-arising (earth), transcending designations (water), freedom from taint (fire), being devoid of primary cause (wind), and formless as space (space). The five elements as aspects of emptiness were intended to portray the world from the perspective of the Buddha’s enlightenment, which was captured in the symbolism of the *gorintō*.<sup>118</sup> From the Buddha’s perspective, subject-object duality collapses, and all things become enlightened and thus coextensive with the body of the Buddha, represented by Mahāvairocana. Following this reasoning, Chōgen’s *gorintō* towers were representations of Mahāvairocana, also brought to life in the statue of Chōgen’s Great Buddha.

Historically, there were different forms of *gorintō* towers, but the *gorintō* that Chōgen used were known as “triangular” *gorintō* (三角五輪塔), since no matter the angle of view, the “fire wheel” of the tower appears two-dimensionally as a triangle. The first recorded usage of the triangular *gorintō* in Japan dates to 1085 at Enkōin, the Daigoji subtemple where Chōgen would later serve. This particular tower contained the ashes of the Empress Kenshi,

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117. Naitō (2006), p. 32. The *gorintō* design can also be seen in Japanese tombstones, though this is a modern development.

118. Abé (1999), p. 281. For a more in-depth account of the function of the Five Elements within esoteric doctrine, see Abé, p. 281-288.

a practice adapted from the tradition of using reliquary towers to protect the Buddha's remains. Kenshi's *gorintō* was stored underneath Enkōin's Sumeru altar (*sumi tan* 須弥壇), the dais that supports the primary devotional object within a Buddhist temple.<sup>119</sup> The Sumeru altar refers to Mt. Sumeru, the *axis mundi* within Buddhist cosmology. Thus, figuratively speaking, Kenshi's remains could not have been given more significant treatment – positioned at the center of the world in a vessel that represented the enlightenment body of the Buddha. Kenshi's *gorintō* was discovered in 1606 when the Portrait Hall for the temple was under reconstruction, and although it was reburied afterwards, notes were made regarding its appearance and dimensions. According to the *Daigoji shinyōroku* 醍醐寺新要録,<sup>120</sup> the tower was composed of copper, and the “fire wheel” was shaped like a pyramid, as with Chōgen's later examples. Each wheel of the tower was lacquered with the color associated with that wheel's element: yellow for earth, white for water, red for fire, black for wind, and blue for space. The “water wheel” contained sutra texts engraved on bronze sheets (銅版經 *dōhankyō*) with many *dhāraṇī*, while the earth “wheel” contained Empress Kenshi's ashes. The tower was about forty-two cm in height, with comparatively smaller “wind” and “space wheels” than Chōgen's creations. The overall height was similar to Chōgen's towers currently stored at Jōdoji and Konomiya Shrine 胡宮神社.

Chōgen's use of *gorintō* towers was probably a tradition inherited through his lineage of masters at Daigoji and its subtemple, the Enkōin. The monk Gihan 義範 (1023-1088), who was also affiliated with the Enkōin, is known to have used another such *gorintō* tower at

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119. Naitō (2006), p. 32).

120. Third fascicle, “円光院篇”.

a different Daigoji subtemple, the Henchi'in 遍智院.<sup>121</sup> Chōgen's Daigoji lineage traces backward through Gen'un 源運, Shōken 勝賢 (1138-1196), Shōkaku 勝覚, and, finally, to Gihan, supporting the conclusion that Chōgen's use of *gorintō* originated with his predecessor.<sup>122</sup>

Chōgen's formative experiences concerning Buddhist relics reinforced the link between relics and expressions of imperial and aristocratic power. He was likely introduced to the *gorintō* reliquary tower via the above lineage while performing rites for Empress Kenshi at Enkōji. Some time after this, he befriended Shōken from the Daigoji Sanbōin, who also presided over imperial rituals for the health of Go-Shirakawa and prayers for rain that involved reliquaries.<sup>123</sup> When Chōgen visited Ayuwangshan and experienced both monks and laymen interacting together in ardent worship of the Ayuwang relic, the episode left a deep impression for all its contrast with his previous knowledge of relic worship. No wonder Chōgen made a point of comparing the relatively narrow scope of relic worship in Japan to what he had seen on his trips to China.

Many of Chōgen's devotional and network building activities upon his return to Japan focused on Pure Land belief – Amitābha statues distributed to the various *bessho*, extensive *nembutsu* rites, and the bestowal of Amidabutsu names on his closest disciples. However, Chōgen supplemented his Pure Land practices with relic worship using *gorintō* towers.

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121. This tower was used at the Henchi'in Kanjō Hall 灌頂堂. Kanjō 灌頂 (*S. abhiṣeka*) is the esoteric rite inaugurating disciples into a tradition or conferring precepts, as based on the ancient practice marking the coronation of Indian monarchs.

122. Naitō (2006), p. 33.

123. Naitō (2012), p. 158.

According to the *Sazenshū*, the first of Chōgen’s activities involving the use of relics in the context of the Tōdaiji *kanjin* was in 1185, when Chōgen installed more than eighty relics<sup>124</sup> into the newly restored Great Buddha. Relics were also inserted into the statues of the flanking attendants and Four Guardian Kings.<sup>125</sup> Where did Chōgen obtain eighty relics? Some were provided by Go-Shirakawa and others by aristocrats such as Kanezane,<sup>126</sup> but the numbers recorded seem short of the eighty he claimed to have used for the Great Buddha. As an aside, in 1191, Chōgen’s disciple Kūtai 空諦 allegedly stole relics buried on Mt. Murō in a case lamented by Kanezane in his diary. The details of the incident are hazy since Kanezane was not admitted to the imperial proceedings where the case was adjudicated, but Kūtai’s actions might account for the large number of relics available for installation in the Great Buddha.<sup>127</sup>

Regardless of the quantity of relics used, Kanezane makes it clear that at least some of the relics were transported to Tōdaiji using a *gorintō*. In his *Gyokuyō*,<sup>128</sup> he writes: “The holy

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124. *Sazenshū*. Kobayashi, p. 483.

125. Naitō (2012), p. 158-159. Sakae Naitō speculates that the Great Buddha relics may have been converted into “wish-fulfilling jewels” (*S. cintāmaṇi*, *J. nyoī hō* 如意宝) provided by the Daigoji abbot, Shōken. This postulate is grounded in the *Daigoji shin yōroku* 醍醐寺新要録, which records Shōken performing a ceremony to create a *nōsashō hōju* 能作性宝珠, the same sort of wish-fulfilling jewel supposedly created by Kūkai’s master, Huiguo, using relic grains and other materials and later buried on Mt. Muro (室生山). Since the consecration of the Great Buddha was certainly the sort of event that would have demanded use of the most precious items available, Naitō’s supposition seems possible.

126. *Sazenshū*, in Kobayashi, p. 68.

127. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 700-701. Naitō (2006), p. 32. For a reconstruction of the events concerning the theft of relics from Mt. Muro in Kanezane’s diary, see Ruppert, p. 177-188.

128. Twelfth day of the fourth month of 1185.

one [in charge of] the Tōdaiji *kanjin* (i.e. Chōgen) arrived. I offered three relics to be inserted into the Great Buddha. [Chōgen] provided a five color *gorintō* accompanied by a written vow (*ganmon* 願文). The top [of the *gorintō*] was inserted into a brocade bag that was also of five colors.”<sup>129</sup> This description of a five-colored *gorintō* matches the description of the one found during the 17th century that was buried at the Enkōin, substantiating the conclusion that Chōgen used the Enkōin prototype for his own design. There is also a strong possibility that the same *gorintō* used to transport the relics was installed with the relics inside the Great Buddha.<sup>130</sup>

Upon the installation of the relics, Kanezane remarked in his diary that the relics had created a living Buddha of the infinite benevolence which the country had sought.<sup>131</sup> Chōgen’s *ganmon* written for the occasion of the eye-opening ceremony of the Great Buddha also makes it clear that Chōgen intended to create a living Buddha who would bestow his benevolence and compassion upon everyone. Chōgen’s *ganmon* states:

It has been said that when the relics of the living body [of the Buddha] are installed inside the Buddha’s<sup>132</sup> womb, they can suddenly luminesce and

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129. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 80.

130. Naitō (2012), p. 159. Of course, the current Great Buddha was rebuilt in the 18th c., so these ideas must remain speculative.

131. Nakao, p. 54-55.

132. This last reference to the Buddha refers to a Buddhist statue, but significantly Chōgen only uses the word “Buddha,” showing the equivalency that existed between the actual, living Buddha and his reproductions in statuary and other types of images.

repeatedly manifest miraculous signs (*ryōzui* 靈瑞).<sup>133</sup> When this [idea] was spread widely to monks and laymen [in Japan], they humbly offered their relics. The emperor, hearing that others [were donating], quickly chose the portion of relics that had been transmitted to the palace, Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺, and Tōji 東寺. Exhibiting particular sincerity for this effort, [he] ordered these relics to be donated, too. When the Daigoji abbot and vice-bishop<sup>134</sup> saw these merit-making acts, he quickly decided to cooperate. For 100 days he prayed and made offerings. At that time, in the middle of autumn, on the twenty-third day of the eighth month, when daytime and nighttime are of equal lengths, and the earthly branches and heavenly stems are in agreement, we took these relics and secreted them inside the heart [of the Great Buddha]. The major superintendent monk, Gahō, was asked to give a liturgical statement. [In his statement, he said,] “I particularly resent [the destruction of Tōdaiji], for how could such a thing happen? The chief in charge of casting the Buddha and Priest General, the Fujiwara Ason, aroused the abbot’s intention to rebuild [Tōdaiji]. He assumed responsibility for offerings to the Buddha, and received the sincere devotion [of patrons].” There is no doubt that the Buddha received these offerings [from the Priest General]. The first emperor [who constructed the Great Buddha, Shōmu], required ten years to complete his meritorious endeavor, so how has this foolish monk (i.e. referring to himself, Chōgen) been able to accomplish the task in less than five years? How amazing! And still more amazing! The tongue cannot express it; the mind cannot fathom it. It is excellent! And yet more excellent! It is so remarkable and outstanding that words cannot exhaust it and writing cannot capture it.

[However,] now we know [we were able to accomplish the reconstruction of the Great Buddha] because all the Buddhas brought their joy to what we have done. The Buddhas transformed themselves into craftsman and performed the carving and gilding. Brahmā, Śakra, and the Nāga offered their help for the sake of the emperor. For this to be accomplished, many living beings who had karmic affinity to the Buddha from many different lives and over many kalpas worked together, so that even in this latter age of the defiled world we were able to accomplish this great task. We wept such tears of joy that our robes will never dry. Our faith is inscribed upon our livers. Our minds are as resolute as stones. With these motivations serving as our vehicle, we can cross the noxious mountains of afflictions. With our merits

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133. This term can also refer to the *udumbara* flower, which only appears every 3,000 years, and symbolizes the Buddha. The flower is mentioned in the *Longer Pure Land Sutra* among other texts (*DDB*, “靈瑞華”).

134. The 權僧正 was technically third in the chain of command, but since the top position of 大僧正 was an honorary position, 僧正 was in actuality the top rank, making 權僧正 the vice-bishop.

serving as our boat, we can sail across the great sea of life and death. Therefore, for the peace and tranquility of this world, so that later generations can reside in favorable conditions and gain the patient acceptance based on awareness of non-arising, [so that they will] abide in the state of non-retrogression, and progress from the conditioned to the non-conditioned, the universal embrace [of the Buddha] will deliver all to salvation.

Particularly the councilor of the left, the Fujiwara Ason, has taken deep refuge [in the Buddha] with undivided single-mindedness, and is destined to attain the Pure Land in his next rebirth, becoming companions in this world and the next [with Amitābha]. All those people who exhaust even one needle or one blade of grass to contribute their efforts, who exhibit sincerity with [just] one utterance or one bow, no matter how grave their sins, regardless of the depth of their good karma, will be led to the gate of enlightenment and enter the house of compassion [of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas]. Homage to Mahāvairocana Buddha! Homage to Mahāvairocana Buddha! Nothing can shake my aspiration! Nothing can shake my aspiration! Respectfully stated by this prostrating monk,

On the 23rd day of the 8th month of the first year of the Bunji Era,  
Respectfully stated by the disciple *śramaṇa*, Chōgen<sup>135</sup>

Soon after installation of the relics, divine powers manifested by the newly reanimated Great Buddha were recorded. According to the *Gyokuyō*, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month of 1186, the year after the eye-opening ceremony, light shone forth from the center of the brows (*byakugō* 白毫) of the Great Buddha as if from a star.<sup>136</sup> On another occasion, the same sort of light was seen emanating in a moving pattern near a lantern in the hall, while on yet another evening light formed a halo about the Great Buddha's face. With these alleged first hand reports, belief in the divine efficacy of the Great Buddha no doubt

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135. Kobayashi, p. 68-69.

136. *Gyokuyō*, Vol. 3, p. 247. The white *ūrṇā* curl between the eyebrows of the Buddha is one of the Thirty-Two Marks of the Buddha (*sanjūni sō* 三十二相). In Mahāyāna sutras, light shines forth from the *ūrṇā* curl to illuminate all worlds.



grew.<sup>137</sup> These records of miraculous phenomenon are not unlike those witnessed by Chōgen while visiting Ayuwangshan in China.

While at Ayuwangshan, Chōgen witnessed the ability for a relic to inspire throngs of devotees in the quest for Buddhist salvation. After returning to Japan, Chōgen envisioned the Great Buddha in similar terms – an emanation of the Buddha’s power in this world that could arouse the thought of enlightenment for all. The power of the Great Buddha was activated by the more than eighty relics Chōgen installed inside. The inclusion of these relics restored the Great Buddha to its previous form as the most powerful emanation of the dharma in Japan. For those in the capital region, including Chōgen’s close associates who formed his inner network, the statue provided spiritual reassurance in the aftermath of a prolonged civil war. But what of the outlying regions of Japan, who never witnessed the completion of the statue? In order to supplement faith in the Great Buddha in the provinces, Chōgen brought the Buddha’s body to his *bessho*, using *gorintō* as receptacles.

Chōgen created a number of *gorintō* towers to house relics not used for the Great Buddha. These *gorintō* were taken to the *bessho* on the Tōdaiji estates, where there were ceremonially dedicated. A number of these towers still exist today, including:

(1) A gilt bronze triangular *gorintō*, Hyōgo Prefecture, Jōdoji 浄土寺 (Figure 23)

(2) An iron jeweled tower (Figure 24) and crystal triangular *gorintō* (1197)

(Figure 25), Yamaguchi Prefecture, Amidaji 阿弥陀寺

(3) A gilt bronze triangular *gorintō* (1198), Shiga Prefecture, Konomiya Shrine

胡宮神社, originally in possession of Binmanji 敏満寺 (Figure 26)

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137. Naitō (2012), p. 159.



Figure 23. *Gilt bronze triangular gorintō*. Kamakura Period (12th c.) Jōdoji 浄土寺, Nara. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 120, p. 171.



Figure 24. *Iron jeweled tower*. Kamakura Period (1197). Amidaji 阿弥陀寺. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 89, p. 144.





Figure 25. *Crystal triangular gorintō*. Kamakura Period (1197). Amidaji 阿弥陀寺. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 89, p. 145.



Figure 26. *Gilt bronze triangular gorintō*. Kamakura Period (1198). Konomiya Shrine 胡宮神社. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 116, p. 168.

(4) A crystal triangular *gorintō* (early Kamakura), Mie Prefecture, Shindaibutsuji

新大仏寺 (Figure 27)

Chōgen's *gorintō* could either be inner or outer receptacles and fashioned from a variety of materials. Outer receptacles were typically made of durable metal, while inner receptacles could be made of more fragile materials such as crystal. *Gorintō* (1) and (3) are outer receptacles that each contain crystal jewel-shaped inner receptacles that house relics. (2) is a crystal tower that houses relics and was itself contained within a larger, jeweled iron tower. (4) is also thought to have been placed within a larger outer receptacle, since the tower is similar to (2).<sup>138</sup>

In the *Sazenshū*, Chōgen also lists several other *gorintō* created for installation at his *bessho* and as recompense for important patrons. Unfortunately, none of these are extant:

(5) A crystal *gorintō* for the Tōdaiji Sonshōin 尊勝院

(6) A gilt bronze *gorintō* for the Tōdaiji *bessho*<sup>139</sup>

(7) A bronze *gorintō* and crystal tower for the three-story pagoda at the Kōyasan

Shinbessho

(8) A bronze *gorintō* for the Watanabe 渡辺 *bessho*

(9) A stone *gorintō* presented to Kanezane<sup>140</sup>

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138. Naitō (2012), p. 159.

139. This *gorintō* was destroyed by fire in 1567, but the relics were saved and placed in a newly fashioned gilt bronze lotus pedestal shaped reliquary. Later in 1586, a gilt bronze *gorintō* outer receptacle was created for the relic to match the original receptacle.

140. Naitō (2012), p. 159-160.





Figure 27. *Crystal triangular gorintō*. Kamakura Period (late 12th-early 13th c.). Shindaibutsuji 新大仏寺. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Daikanjin Chōgen*, no. 121, p. 172.

As to exactly what these *gorintō* would have looked like, (3) is described merely as a bronze *gorintō* in the *Sazenshū*, seemingly indicating that Chōgen used this terminology to refer more generally to triangular *gorintō*. Therefore, although (5) through (9) are merely described as “*gorintō*” by Chōgen, they were probably the triangular variety, as well, and thus resembled Chōgen’s extant *gorintō*.<sup>141</sup>

We have some historical evidence about the dedication ceremonies for the installation of Chōgen’s *gorintō* reliquaries at his *bessho*. In the case of the Konomiya Shrine *gorintō*, an accompanying donation letter reads:

These are actual relics of the Buddha, which cannot be doubted. If false rumors [about them] spread, there will certainly be those who succumb to the sin of speaking untruthfully (*mōgozai* 妄語罪). We should be observant beforehand. It is important that [if this situation arises, it] be understood quickly, because [in that case] an offering of reverence and worship (恭敬供養 *kugyō kuyō*) should be performed, and the priests and the palace must be apprised.<sup>142</sup>

This passage subtly references Chōgen’s experience at Ayuwangshan in China, where he witnessed the sincere reverence of lay disciples for the relic stored there.

Chōgen hoped that his *gorintō* reliquaries would elicit the same sort of response in Japan. By installing *gorintō* at his *bessho*, Chōgen brought the body of the Great Buddha – symbolized through the *gorintō* and the relics stored within – to the congregations of Pure Land devotees at the *bessho* and a much wider audience than could have directly witnessed the completion of the Great Buddha statue itself. Thus, Chōgen’s reliquaries reinforced his

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141. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

142. Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. (2006), p. 169.



connections to the outer network by bringing his devotees in the provinces into contact with the most significant achievement of the *kanjin* campaign, the Great Buddha and the spiritual powers it bestowed.

Chōgen's *gorintō* were not just intended as peripheral to his Pure Land activities, but also reflected his ideas concerning the complementarity of Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism he expressed elsewhere. In this regard, Chōgen's was probably influenced by Kakuban, who described the relationship between the Five Elements and Amitābha in his *Illuminating Secret Commentary on the Five Cakra and the Nine Syllables*. According to that commentary, the five elements represented in the *gōrinto* are equivalent to the nine character *dhāraṇī* for Amitābha, which was representative of the nine levels of rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land.<sup>143</sup> For Kakuban, this amounted to another explanation of the identity between Mahāvairocana and Amitābha.

Chōgen adapted this combinatory doctrine concerning *gorintō* and Pure Land practice both at Kōyasan and Tōdaiji. On the Kōyasan bell dated to 1176 that records his three trips to China are also seed syllables for the (1) Śākyamuni triad, (2) Amitābha triad, (3) *Amitābha Mantra*, (4) *Golden Light Mantra* (*kōmyō shingon* 光明眞言), (5) *Lotus Mandala* (*hokke mandara* 法華曼荼羅), and (6) Five Elements. This combination of seed syllables conveyed the identity of the Five Elements, representing Mahāvairocana's universal body, with the vow to take refuge in Amitābha.<sup>144</sup> At the same time, the seed syllables for the Śākyamuni triad

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143. Naitō (2006), p. 33.

144. The Amitābha mantra expresses the intention to take refuge in the power of the radiance of Amitābha. The use of the Amitābha triad seed syllables also conveys this idea.

represented the relics of the Buddha's body, and the light mantra expressed the intention to take refuge in the power of Mahāvairocana's radiance, which eliminates all sins. In this way, the seed syllables on the bell express the unity of the bodies of Amitābha, Mahāvairocana, and the historical Buddha.<sup>145</sup> Chōgen also clearly articulated this idea using a *gorintō* tower placed inside one of the Tōdaiji Great Southern Gate Vajra-wielding Guardians. Inscribed on the five wheels of the tower from top to bottom was not the *dhāraṇī* for Mahāvairocana, but the recitation formula for Amitābha's name: “*Na, Mu, Ami, Da, Bu*” (ナ, ム, アミ, タ, ブ).<sup>146</sup>

## Conclusions

Integral to Chōgen's reconstruction of Tōdaiji was the creation of a two-tiered network of religious disciples, managers, donors, and estate workers who each facilitated the reconstruction of the temple different ways. The organization of Chōgen's network had much in common with the two-tiered network centered upon Yanqingsi in Ningbo, the port of disembarkation for his three trips to China. Both networks consisted of an inner tier, composed of monks who engaged in rigorous Pure Land worship, and an outer tier of lay disciples (or mixed monastic and lay in Chōgen's case), who donated funds and participated in relatively less demanding and frequent Pure Land rituals.

Chōgen's inner network was distinguished by the use of Amidabutsu names bestowed on each member, a practice whose closest precedent was also found in China – the religious autonyms adopted by the People of the Way. Chōgen's Amidabutsu naming practice was

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145. Gomi, p. 97-98.

146. Naitō (2006), p. 33

configured around Chōgen as the primary emanation of Amitābha, “Namu-Amidabutsu,” while his disciples became secondary emanations of Amitābha through their connections with their master. Chōgen’s Amidabutsu disciples assumed responsibility for many of the most important tasks of the Tōdaiji reconstruction, including the sculpting of Buddhist images, management of estates, and rebuilding of Tōdaiji’s halls.

The outer network was much larger, and included many of the highest ranking aristocrats, most powerful warriors, and most senior ecclesiastics. These individuals were documented on *kechien* lists that established spiritual connections to Amitābha as partial recompense for their meritorious sponsorship of the Buddhist images installed at Tōdaiji and related institutions. The names of many more members of Chōgen’s outer network who resided on or near the Tōdaiji estates as common laborers were never recorded, though Pure Land ceremonies at Chōgen’s *bessho* also served as a spiritual rewards for their efforts, connecting them to the those institutions’ principle deity of worship, Amitābha.

While the underlying ideology of Chōgen’s network was based on Pure Land Buddhism, Chōgen believed in the identity of Amitābha and Mahāvairocana, the deity represented by the Great Buddha. Using a number of innovative strategies, including the installation of *gorintō* reliquaries that symbolized Mahāvairocana at his *bessho*, Chōgen was able to reinforce the connections between his outer network and the Great Buddha, as well as promote the dual worship of Amitābha and Mahāvairocana. The distribution of *gorintō* also fulfilled Chōgen’s ambition to bring relic worship to the common people of Japan in a fashion that resembled the exuberant devotion of ordinary pilgrims he witnessed at Ayuwangshan in China.

## Afterword

### East China Sea Religious Macroculture and Tōdaiji

The circumstances that inaugurated Chōgen's path toward a distinctive monastic career began in his early years, with the assistance of powerful aristocrats who discovered his great promise. However, nothing separated Chōgen more from his peers than his experiences in China. He was the first recorded monk of any renown to travel to and from the continent since Chōnen's voyage from 983 to 987. Chōgen's tales of crossing the Tiantaishan Rock Bridge to drink tea with the Five Hundred Arhats, and beholding the miracles manifested by the Ayuwangshan relic helped open the sluice gates of curiosity about China for a torrent of monks who made similar voyages shortly after, including Eisai 榮西 (1141-1215), Kaku'a 覺阿 (1143-?), Shunjō 俊仍 (1166-1227), Jōgō 淨業 (1187-1259), Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253), and Enni Bennen 圓爾辯圓 (1202-1280).

Chōgen's importance in the history of East Asian Buddhism outruns the rebuilding of Tōdaiji, though his massive *kanjin* campaign that involved almost every region of Japan was perhaps his single, most important accomplishment. More broadly speaking, Chōgen was at the forefront of an emerging East China Sea religious macroculture that transcended traditional borders.<sup>1</sup> While Japanese Buddhism from the beginning owed its existence to the infiltration of materials and ideas from the continent, prior to the mid-Heian Period, the history of religious exchange was more punctuated, with longer intervals separating maritime contact. The emergence of regular voyages across the sea by Hakata traders, many of whom

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1. See Lippit (2009) for his discussion of this idea.

dealt in religious artifacts themselves, solved logistical complications for monks like Chōgen who sought to further their educations in China. Chōgen's ambitions were also supported by Japan's new class of warrior overlords who sought religious legitimation through the novelties of continental Buddhist practice and art.

In the Kamakura Period, the blooming East China Sea religious culture that was indebted to the efforts of these merchants, monks, and warriors thrived upon the popular shipping lanes between the major Chinese and Japanese trade ports of Ningbo and Hakata. On the Chinese side, Ningbo was itself a major religious destination due to the presence of Yanqingsi, the country's preeminent Tiantai institution. The city was also within easy reach of Tiantaishan to the the east and Ayuwangshan to the southwest. Since the Jurchen invasions had closed northern routes to Wutaishan and other sites famous to pilgrims, Chōgen was sure to include all three southern destinations on his itineraries. Ningbo, Tiantaishan, and Ayuwangshan continued to be highlights on the pilgrimages followed by later Japanese monks, as well.

Proposing the concept of a transmarine religious culture between the Southern Song and Japan during this time period begs the question, what did Ningbo and its environs mean to Chōgen in religious terms? As with previous monks who visited the continent, Chōgen was interested in obtaining specimens of the "material yield" of Chinese Buddhism. Sutras and commentaries, biographies and lineage charts, paintings and statues, as well as inscriptions and poetry were all important because they established a tangible – and therefore authoritative – link with the continent, validating the efforts of their couriers. Material items could also be easily reproduced. Written texts, for example, could be copied and dispersed so that the broader Japanese religious community could coordinate their knowledge with recent

intellectual developments by their sister communities abroad. Paintings and statues could likewise serve as prototypes for Japanese artisans, who incorporated contemporary Chinese designs into their crafts or simply duplicated Chinese pieces as closely as possible. Chōgen also brought from China knowledge of the religious architecture, civil engineering, metallurgy, and masonry necessary for the construction of Tōdaiji and his *bessho*.

While the introduction of new processes for logistics, casting, and building were significant, Chōgen's unique contribution to the formation of East China Sea macroculture was not so much the conveyance of Chinese things, as the replication of patterns of religious organization. Organizational patterns, of course, are more abstract than a text or artwork, and therefore more difficult to convey, teach, and install, particularly in another country with an established religious culture of its own. Nevertheless, what captured Chōgen's attention during his travels above all else was the novel ways Chinese Buddhists organized mass assemblies for communal practice, which drew participants inclusively from across the social spectrum. Such organizations included the vast Pure Land network centered upon Yanqingsi that seemingly reached to every corner of Ningbo; group pilgrimages made by ordinary lay disciples to Ayuwangshan; and the entrepreneurship of the People of the Way, who founded their own congregations, financed rural cloisters, and built bridges to serve their communities.

Chōgen's prevailing interest became the power of Pure Land worship as a model for mass religious activity, network formation, and campaign fundraising. If one of Chōgen's visits to Yanqingsi coincided with the yearly assembly on the Buddha's birthday, which seems likely, he witnessed an assembly of ten thousand members, overflowing into the temple's courtyard, chanting Amitābha's name in unison. Such an impressive display of Pure

Land faith no doubt deeply moved him. When Chōgen encountered the challenges of building a donor network to fund the Tōdaiji reconstruction, he attempted to replicate the success of the Yanqingsi model, in which contributions from the lay congregation contributed greatly to the temple's operations. Just like Zhili more than a century before, Pure Land faith became a lynchpin for Chōgen's mobilization efforts. He duplicated the basic two-tier structure of the Yanqingsi network by differentiating between ecclesiastics responsible for management of estates and production of icons, on hand, and donors and common devotees who contributed finances and labor, on the other. While Chōgen's Pure Land network perhaps never reached the size of the one at Yanqingsi, extant *kechien* documents suggest that Chōgen's network probably involved thousands of lay and monastic disciples if all the congregations at his *bessho* could be counted.

Chōgen also aimed to bolster his network by encouraging the sort of vigorous relic devotion he witnessed on Ayuwangshan. Until Chōgen's time, Japanese Buddhist relics had been treated as a pseudo-currency circulated among the imperial family, the nobility, and privileged monks from a few temples such as Tōji and Tōshōdaiji. In contrast, in China, Chōgen was surprised to encounter pilgrims who journeyed from afar to fulfill lifetime dreams of glimpsing the Ayuwang relic, put on exhibition for the public good. Based on this experience abroad, Chōgen conceived of a plan to incorporate relics into his merit-making and fund-raising activities. While he followed the standard procedure of installing relics within the newly completed Great Buddha in order to "activate" the statue, he also installed reliquaries at the Tōdaiji *bessho*. There, Japanese both high and low from across the land could now gaze in wonderment for the first time at the "actual" remains of the Buddha's body, while partaking in the worldly and spiritual benefits they produced. Chōgen's relics

established a direct link to the power of the Great Buddha in Nara, encouraging a sense of organizational commitment among provincial authorities and laborers toward Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign to rebuild Tōdaiji.

Chōgen may also have borrowed his Amidabutsu naming practice from lay confraternities in China who styled themselves the “People of the Way” and used autonyms as group designations. Given the time period and geographical scope of their emergence, the model for these groups' formation may ultimately have been Zhili's Pure Land network of lay disciples at Yanqingsi, which expanded beyond the confines of urban Ningbo, branching into independent networks in the provinces. In any case, by Chōgen's time, the People of the Way had established rural religious networks and undertook merit-making projects with which Chōgen would have closely identified: the building of small chapels and construction of bridges and other public works. Like the autonyms used by the People of the Way, Chōgen's Amidabutsu naming practice began as a means to foster group identity among his disciples. Chōgen's deployment of his network to fundraise, construct facilities at the *bessho*, and engineer public works also shared much with the People of the Way's activities.

By reproducing the patterns of religious organization he witnessed in Ningbo, Chōgen's Pure Land network catalyzed the formation of an East China Sea macroculture. While Chōgen's network was centered at Tōdaiji, its edges radiated outward to the *bessho* in the provinces. The result was a synchronization of religious organization and activity that seamlessly connected the Southern Song with much of the territory under the Kamakura shogunate. Following Chōgen's death, elements of his network were absorbed by other religious groups, including followers of the sectarian Pure Land movements who traced their



lineages to Hōnen and Shinran. Over time, Chōgen's religious innovations would become even more embedded in Japanese society.

Chōgen's interest in China was driven by a conception that China was the most authentic source of Buddhism outside India, the Buddha's homeland. In this way, Chōgen was no different from his predecessors – monks who for centuries had traveled to China “in search of the Law” and returned to integrate their discoveries into the fabric of Japanese religious life. Chōgen's most famous forbearers included those who founded significant schools or lineages, including Kūkai, founder of the Japanese Shingon School; Saichō, founder of the Tendai School; and Ennin, progenitor of one of Hieizan's two most important lineages.

Where Chōgen differed from his predecessors who studied abroad was not his high regard for China or his role as a religio-cultural transmitter, per say, but the societal scope of his activities upon his return. Many of his forbearers founded schools and established temples in the capital region while forging bonds with imperial and aristocratic patrons in order to secure sponsorship for their activities. In some cases, their activities also took them to more remote regions: Saichō traveled to Kantō 関東 and Tōhoku 東北 in order to establish temples for the spread of the Tendai School, while Kūkai is known to have mobilized commoners in Sanuki 讃岐 to build a large reservoir. However, generally speaking, Chōgen's predecessors demonstrated less ambition to serve as Buddhist ambassadors to the common people. For this reason, we might describe them as representatives of “trickle-down Buddhism.” In other words, by expanding their influence among the court and aristocracy, Chōgen's predecessors hoped to establish lasting traditions that would first take root among the elite, and eventually percolate down to the masses. Chōgen took a different approach.

He aimed to bring patterns of religious worship and organization he observed in China not only to the capital, where the rebuilding of Tōdaiji served the interests of elites, but also to the provinces, where he hoped to replicate Chinese models of lay Pure Land and relic devotion. Chōgen's strategy was as much bottom-up as it was top-down. While he would have never attained his influential position as *kanjin hijiri* without the support of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, the construction superintendent Fujiwara no Yunitada, the Murakami Genji clan, and other well-heeled patrons, Chōgen's *kanjin* campaign propagated Buddhism from Nara to Hakata and every province in between, reaching aristocrats and common people alike. Despite his reputation as an intrepid continental traveler and rise in rank to Great Monk (*Daikashō* 大和尚), Chōgen himself never rose above the compassionate concern that all should share in the merits of his accomplishments.

Chōgen's good works add another layer to his regard for the common classes. By building bridges and roads, as well as repairing ports and reservoirs, Chōgen encouraged his own vision of socially engaged Buddhism. This marked one of, if not the very first, occasion that a monk representing the establishment Buddhism of the major institutions in Nara or Kyoto persevered on behalf of the common people. Historically, there were "extra-establishment" monks such as Gyōki, who wandered the countryside free from the bonds of organizational responsibility and earned renown for improving local roads, bridges, and ports. However, Gyōki was first persecuted for his activism, since it fell outside the purview of the

powerful Nara religious authorities.<sup>2</sup> Chōgen, on the other hand, was unique in finding ways to balance his duties as Tōdaiji *kanjin hijiri* with a social welfare agenda.

According to a legend found in the *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語, when the Tōdaiji Great Buddha Hall was under construction in the 8th century, Emperor Shōmu invited an old fishmonger who had wandered into the temple's dharma assembly to give a lecture. On the sutra reading desk the fishmonger laid a mackerel, which miraculously transformed into the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. He proceeded to deliver a lecture in Sanskrit and then suddenly disappeared, leaving behind only the yoke used to carry the fish. Later, the yoke was plunged into the ground in front of the eastern face of the temple, where it sprouted leaves and branches. From that time, it was known as the “mackerel tree” (*saba no ki* 鯖木). In the years after, when Tōdaiji prospered, the tree flourished. When the temple declined, the tree withered. As the Taira began their assault on Nara in 1181, the tree began to die, and eventually burned in the fire that destroyed the rest of the temple.<sup>3</sup>

When Chōgen's associate, Eisai, traveled to China, one of the most iconic items he procured was a cutting of the Bodhi Tree planted at Tiantaishan, said to have stemmed from

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2. As discussed in Chapter 3, while Gyōki's history was rewritten to say that he served as the original *kanjin hijiri* for Tōdaiji, these legendary claims were not made until the 12th century.

3. *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語, in Takagi Ichinosuke 高木市之助, ed. *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文學大系, Vol. 27, p. 152. Also see Taniguchi (2008), p. 53. The Bodhi Tree itself would become an object of worship in Japan. For example, the monk Myōe returned to his hometown of Yuasa 湯浅 in Kii 紀伊 in 1201-1203, and selected a tree to serve as the “Bodhi Tree” for the main object of worship at his *parinirvāṇa* assembly. After this, in his *Shiza kōshiki* 四座講式 lectures written for this occasion, Myōe used a *parinirvāṇa* painting, Buddhist relics, and an image of the Bodhi Tree as the principle objects of worship.

the original tree under which Śākyamuni sat and attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya. The cutting was shipped to Japan in 1190 prior to Eisai's return and eventually planted at the Great Buddha Hall in 1195 in the spot previously occupied by the mackerel tree, in the same year as the dedication ceremony for the hall. Just as this sacred tree was transplanted and retransplanted in foreign soils to symbolize the unmediated dissemination of the Buddha's dharma, Chōgen's Tōdaiji was a window to the continent, constructed using Chinese models for Buddhist social development that Chōgen transplanted to Japan.

In 1567, history would come full circle once more. The rival forces of the Miyoshi 三好 clan, who controlled several provinces in the Kinai 畿内 region, clashed with Matsunaga Hisahide 松永久秀 (1510-1577), a former retainer of the Miyoshi *daimyo* 大名, transforming Nara into a battlefield. During a nighttime raid on the Miyoshi encampment around Tōdaiji, the Great Buddha Hall was set ablaze. As the pillars of Chōgen's great achievement came crashing down, the Great Buddha's head was severed, a symbol of the paroxysms of violence that would envelop the country. Almost a century would pass before another monk, Kōkei 公慶 (1648-1705), rose to lead a second campaign to restore the statue and its temple to former glory. Armed with the original collection ladle and gong Chōgen used to solicit donations five hundred years before, Kōkei retraced his predecessor's footsteps in search of popular support. The fruits of his labors can still be seen in Nara today.

On the grounds of a small subtemple of Tōdaiji in Nara, the Gokōin 五劫院, rests Kōkei's gravestone, carved in the form a *gorintō* pagoda (Figure 28). Though Kōkei lived and died in another era, the name inscribed on his gravestone would have been familiar to Chōgen during his lifetime. The inscription reads: "Kyō-Amidabutsu" 敬阿弥陀仏, or

“Praise to Amitābha Buddha,” a play on Chōgen’s own adopted name, “Homage to Amitābha Buddha.”<sup>4</sup>

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4. Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. (2005), p. 21.



Figure 28. *Kōkei's gorintō gravestone*. Gokōin 五劫院, Nara. Reprinted from Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, ed. *Tōdaiji kōkei shōnin* 東大寺公慶上人, p. 21.

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### Abbreviations

- DDB Digital Dictionary of Buddhism. <<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb>>.
- FXDCD *Foxue dacidian* 佛學大辭典. Wikisource.  
<<https://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/佛學大辭典>>.
- FZTJ *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀. Edited by Zhipan 志磐. T49, n. 2035.
- JAANUS *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*.  
<<http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus>>.
- T *Taishō shinshu daizōkyō*. 85 vols. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡邊海旭, et al. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1914-1922.
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